

# fifth estate

an anti-authoritarian magazine  
of ideas and action

A Letter From

**New  
Orleans**



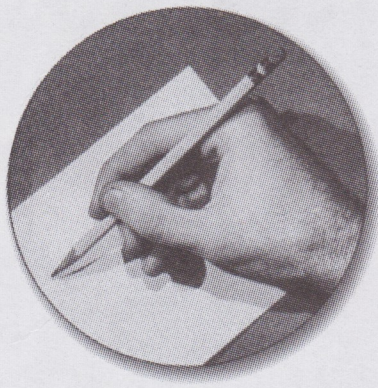
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Issue 371 Winter 2006

**Poisoning the Poor  
Psychology of Freedom  
War Against the Imagination**





*To My Dearest Fifth Estate . . .*

# LETTERS



## Six billion healthy people?

I read with some surprise EB Maple's letter (see FE 370, Fall 2005) regarding an article I wrote which was published in the Winter 2005 issue of the *Fifth Estate*.

Maple writes: "The standard issue primitivism of the article's message appeals to me in many ways..." Thanks, a rather condescending way to agree with some aspects of my vision, but an acknowledgment nevertheless.

But then Maple adds: "Still, a call for the creation of organically self-organized subsistence movements that are aimed at asserting access to land doesn't seem particularly feasible for too many people when we're talking about an increasingly urbanizing trend across the world."

I believe anarchists and other rebels need to encourage each other to keep trying. Eventually some of us will have successes and a momentum will be created which will be on our side. And remember, land based peoples everywhere are counting on us to begin listening and learning. But then, perhaps Maple and I don't agree on what we are aiming for, because s/he also states: "I...wonder what a revolution would really look like; how much of the old industrial, citified world will we bring into the new one?"

Civilization didn't colonize everywhere at once, nor did it reach its current strength immediately, so its undoing might occur to different degrees and at different places at different times. In this respect, a modern-primitive synthesis might take hold in some areas should coercive

authority there be destroyed (or wither away?), but hopefully Maple agrees with me that any amount of the "old industrial, citified world" would obviously be out of place in a truly "new one".

Maple's question "Besides, can tens of millions move to the countryside?" was very misleading. I didn't suggest anywhere that tens of millions of people should get up tomorrow morning at ten o'clock and head out to the countryside.

Most ecologists recognize that urban life is unsustainable and damaging to human (and many other life forms) health. A healthy person lives in a healthy habitat. A city is not a healthy habitat. Somehow all of us need to be fighting for and dreaming of and moving toward non-urban lives. Not tens of millions EB, but six billion!

## Seaweed

**British Columbia, Canada**

**FE Note: See also "Both Sides Now," this issue, pages 34-35**

## The City is Civilization

The impossibility of land reoccupation/reclamation/reintegration on our part means the impossibility for indigenous autonomy and freedom and consequently an impossibility for squatting movements to emerge in the cities, the most intensely privatized zones on the map (See EB Maple's letter, FE 370, Fall 2005). Why stick with the possible, with politics why stay within the parameters defined by the ruling ideology?

It is time to shed feelings of waiting

and defeatism. How do situations, how do things change? When people have had enough. Ya Basta. Haven't you had enough?

"We are reminded that the city as polis created not only politics, but the police." That is from a David Watson article.

I add: We are reminded that the city as a walled sewage system created not only dead rivers—but civilization. Why let scientific statistical research determine anarchist strategy, dreaming, re-wilding and actions? We all know about the frightening world power relations are constructing for us. We all live in it.

## Orang Outan

**British Columbia, Canada**

## Anarchist Among Rednecks

It was my intention to never be in a city again. Flush toilets and capitalists are just so—aggressive. But, here I am. Living in a bus and traveling about sometimes means ending up in strange places. In fact, it might actually mean always ending up in strange places!

I've never had any desire to visit hideous, tacky Florida. But life takes us where we need to be, if we let it. A domino-effect of circumstance forced me to come hang out with one of my oldest and dearest friends. So, even in hideous, tacky Florida, I'm at home.

My friend David owns a motorcycle shop. He specializes in keeping older, funkier bikes on the road. Bikers come from all over to find rare, particular doo-hickies.

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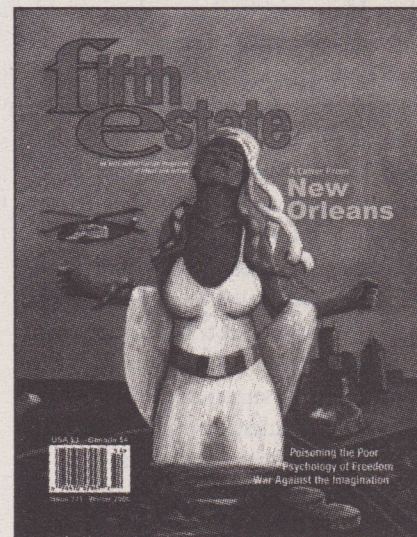


# fifth estate

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**FE 371 Winter 2006**



*Special thanks to Zach Kozdron for our amazing front & back covers this issue! You can contact him via this magazine.*

The *Fifth Estate* is a cooperative, non-profit, anti-authoritarian project published since 1965 by a volunteer collective of friends and comrades. We often hold divergent views on issues within this magazine, but all share an anti-authoritarian perspective, both as critique and vision. We also have a commitment to non-dogmatic, action-oriented writing and activity to bring about a new world. As opposed to professionals who publish to secure wages, or those who invest in the media information industry, we produce this magazine as an expression of our resistance to an unjust and destructive society. No copyright. No paid staff. No advertisements.

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This issue's theme—The Psychology of Freedom—comes to the reader without pretension or self-righteousness. We are not trying to instruct others on how they should conduct themselves in their personal or collective lives. Rather, we feel it is important to explore the anti-authoritarian ideals we often project onto society from the inside of our communities and lives.

It doesn't take an anthropologist or a great theorist to realize that people thrive in situations where love, sharing, and mutual aid prevail as opposed to what constitutes the current monstrosity in which we live where ruthless competition, violence, fear, and rage are the norm. Early societies manifested the former qualities as a matter of necessity; their survival depended upon mutuality. However, in the modern world, the permanent mobilization of fear is the basis for sustaining the state and the economy; this fear has roots deep in the first state societies.

While people once lived in harmony as an integral part of nature, now they live in fear of the wild, of outsiders, of newly constructed punitive sky gods, of the power of women, of those below one in the social hierarchy. Fear was then transformed into a rage against all that was threatening. Security came with surrender to the rulers and the supreme Ruler, complete with a military and productive apparatus.

The political state depends on an infantilizing mass character structure of submission. Mass acquiescence feeds the myth of the state's necessity. But for all that the rigid global order may deliver to some in material terms and even through its twisted spiritual institutions, the state's destructive impact on our collective psyche and the planet's body becomes more painfully obvious each day.

In Eric Fromm's instructive 1955 text, *The Sane Society*, he asked what if the definitions of modern society were applied to an individual; how would we judge that person? A homicidal, egoistical, psychopath was the answer. His conclusions for solving our common human dilemma was to establish what he called communitarian socialism—anarchism—which reinstalls those principles and emotions that nurtured our species through its first million or so years.

# FE 371 About this Issue



We agree, but what do we do while waiting for and hastening the revolution, and what if there isn't one in our lifetime? How do we navigate an increasingly frightening and destructive world that seems clearly headed in the opposite direction from what we desire? How do we maintain emotional and planetary health? Some of the tentative solutions implied in these pages are obviously incomplete, only part of the story. But some of the most personal and local venues for liberation suggested—such as love and intimacy, laughter and erotic play—get close to the root of what we value and why we fight against alienation. Sexual and emotional repression convey the core of how so many people get skewed and fragmented, abused and hurt in this society.

Our fourth issue of 2005—our fortieth anniversary year—is published late in December, hence it is labeled as Winter 2006, so as to not have it appear almost immediately out of date. With this late-breaking edition, we have completed four consecutive years of consistently producing four issues a year, quite an accomplishment after publishing sporadically for much of the 1990s—and not at all in the year 2001.

Also, this issue was produced solely in Tennessee by our small “bolo bonobo” production collective at the Pumpkin Hollow community, where the Barn and our mail-order book distro is based. For our Spring 2006 edition, production duties will return to the Detroit group, and we will continue to alternate responsibilities in this manner into the indefinite future.

While we are still evolving and working out the finer details of our new editorial arrangements, emerging is a new arrangement where the two geographically-based collectives within the larger collective will work cooperatively and autonomously. The discerning reader will probably notice some changes, especially between the personality of issues produced in different locales. We'll do our best to provide quality art, writing, and provocative content—wherever the issue is finally edited and designed.

This time, much of our regular news and analysis coverage has been eclipsed by attention paid to our friends in New Orleans, the central feature of which is John Clark's compelling, “A Letter from New Orleans.” In many ways, then, the theme connects back to our lead article on New Orleans. Despite the harsh lessons in race, class, and catastrophe meted out by this mass crisis, New Orleans also represents the charm and charisma of a new culture based on the carnivalesque. New Orleans represents and maintains values of music and dancing and pleasure and sensuality exemplified in the face of unspeakable suffering.





October 11, 2005

Dear Friends,

I regret that I can't be with you for the international Reclus conference in Milan this week. I was looking forward very much to seeing all of my good friends there and participating in the extraordinary event that you've organized. I decided that to help make up for my absence from my session tomorrow that I'd send you some reflections on what I've been doing recently and what has been occurring here in New Orleans.

I was in Dharamsala, India in late August when I heard that a major hurricane was approaching New Orleans. I was there with the

The following letter was sent to an International Conference on Elisée Reclus, the 19th century anarchist geographer and political theorist. The conference, which was held in Milan on October 12-13, was one of several planned for 2005 to celebrate the 175th anniversary of Reclus' birth and the 100th anniversary of his death. I was invited to do a presentation but couldn't leave New Orleans to attend. Fortunately, our electricity, which had been out for almost six weeks, resumed shortly before the conference, and I was able to write the letter hastily and find a place to email it. It arrived in Milan the day before the conference and was read during the proceedings, and it will be translated and published in the Italian anarchist magazine *Libertaria*. —John Clark

Louisiana Himalayan Association (a group I belong to that works with Tibetan refugees), teaching English and making plans for future programs there for my students in New Orleans. Ironically, I soon found out that I was to leave the Tibetan refugee community to return to what had itself become a city of refugees. When I arrived home, I found a city of empty streets, fallen trees, debris scattered everywhere, abandoned cars, flood-ravaged houses, and eerie silence. Since then, I've been working with the cleanup effort in my neighborhood and with several grassroots organizations around the city. Over the past month, the city has slowly begun to come back, as symbolized by the "second line" jazz funeral parade that marched through the city Sunday—the first time this has happened since the hurricane.

(continued on the next page)



## Reclusan Reflections on an Unnatural Disaster

# Letter from New Orleans

The following reflections are a bit in the spirit of a jazz funeral—they mourn our collective tragedy but speak out also for our collective hope. They are also very much in the spirit of Reclus, who will frequently be quoted in what follows. If Reclus, despite all his social and ecological prescience, didn't actually predict the Hurricane Katrina disaster a century in advance, we'll see that much of what he said is rather prophetic in relation both to this particular event and to the state of the world in which we live today.

Writing in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century during his two-year stay in Louisiana, Reclus commented on the ecologically precarious condition of the city of New Orleans. In *A Voyage to New Orleans: Anarchist Impressions of the Old South*, Reclus writes, "One has only to dig a few centimeters, or during dry spells, one or two meters, to reach muddy water. Also, the slightest rain is enough to flood the streets, and when a heavy rain beats down over the city, all of the avenues and plazas become rivers and lagoons. The steam engines work almost constantly to rid New Orleans of its stagnant waters and to discharge them through a canal into Lake Pontchartrain, four miles north of the river." He further notes that "the districts far from the Mississippi are only a few centimeters above sea level, and people's homes are separated from the alligator nests only by drainage pools of stagnant and always iridescent water. . . ."

Since the time of Reclus, the city has spread far beyond the natural levees of the Mississippi and the few so-called "ridges" or higher ground on which it was first constructed. Much of it now lies well below sea level—at times as much as three meters or more. As the city has grown, it has expanded to areas more and more susceptible to flooding, and the job of pumping water out has become increasingly more difficult—and as we now know, sometimes impossible! Furthermore, the destruction of Louisiana's coastal cypress forests and the massive erosion of coastline (ultimately reaching the level of forty to fifty square miles per year) have resulted not only in the loss of great natural beauty but also in the elimination of the city's natural protective barrier against the destructive force of hurricanes. According to an often-cited statistic, the loss of 2.7 miles of coastal wetlands results in about a one-foot increase in storm surge.

Reclus notes that throughout history despots have "placed cities in areas in which they would never have grown up spontaneously," so that "once established in such unnatural environments, they have only been able to develop at the cost of an enormous loss of vital energy." Today, he says, such "unnatural" urbanization is caused not by mad tyrants but rather by the despotism of the market: by "powerful capitalists, speculators, and presidents of financial syndicates." Our "unnatural metropolis" (as it has been aptly labeled in one geographical work) has grown irrationally and anti-ecologically as a result of the tyranny of capital, with its imperious dictates of profit, growth, development, and blind, opportunistic exploitation.

The local media repeated the refrain that the true destructive potential of a major hurricane was ignored not only by the politicians and other major decision-makers—but by the population at large. In short, nobody really caught on, and nobody really warned us. Nobody is really guilty because everybody is equally guilty. This is, however, far from the truth. Environmental writers such as John McPhee and Christopher Hallowell have written eloquently of the coming disaster; official hearings have been held in which its details have been discussed; and eventually and occasionally, even the popular media chimed in. Moreover, ecological activists—certainly the most radical ones, often contemptuously dismissed by the complacent mainstream—have continually stressed the dangers of ecologically irrational urban sprawl, deforestation, and coastal erosion. They have pointed out the aggravating effects of global climate change, with the consequent likelihood of increased storm activity and intensity and rising sea levels, and have called for an immediate change of direction. These supposed prophets of doom have now been proven to be the true realists, for this year has already seen the second-highest number of tropical storms in history, and the season is not yet over. (Since this was written several more tropical storms and one major hurricane have occurred. The year has seen the most storm activity in the past 150 years.)





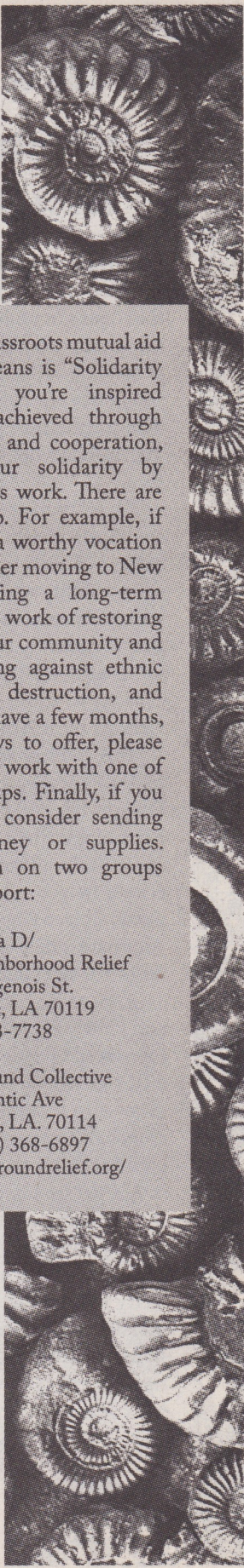
A century and a half ago, Reclus saw these destructive social forces at work and suggested what their consequences might be. He observes that "foremost among the causes that have vanquished so many successive civilizations" has been "the brutal violence with which most nations have treated the nourishing earth." In "The Feeling for Nature in Modern Society," he specifies among the evils that have led to this result that they have "cut down forests" and "caused rivers to overflow." In another telling passage from the same early work (1866), he writes of a "secret harmony" that exists between humanity and the natural world and warns that "when reckless societies allow themselves to meddle with that which creates the beauty of their domain, they always end up regretting it."

What they come to regret is called disaster. As in the case of Thanatos in general, disaster is the Thing that haunts everyone: the Thing that we spend our lives thinking about by not thinking about it. Reclus was struck by the fact that New Orleans was a city plagued by disaster. And he was perplexed by the seeming complacency of its inhabitants in the face of its ongoing disasters and occasional catastrophes. Soon after his arrival, he was to be stricken in one of the epidemics of yellow fever that periodically killed a large percentage of the city's population. But what made a greater impression on him at the time of his arrival were the spectacular fires that constantly plagued the city and ultimately destroyed almost all the architecture dating back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In *Voyage*, he writes, "In New Orleans . . . the total destruction caused by fires is equivalent to half of the loss due to similar catastrophes throughout France." He was understandably astounded that New Orleans, a city of 200,000 at that time, could have half as much destruction by fire as his own country, with its tens of millions of inhabitants.

Reclus was also shocked by the terrible ongoing loss of life that took place on the river. He observes that "from the construction of the first steamboat up to the present time, more than 40,000 persons have been burned or drowned in the Mississippi because of accidents of all sorts, including explosions, collisions, or fires—an average of 1,000 victims per year." One of the most striking passages in *Voyage to New Orleans* is his description of a fire on the river in which seven large steamships in a row were consumed in flames and destroyed.

New Orleans has continued to live with disaster and the threat of catastrophe, along with its continued propensity to think about the unthinkable by resolutely refusing to think about it. As mentioned, it has long been known on some level that a powerful hurricane directly hitting the city or coming close to it would produce a major disaster and possibly even destroy the city. In 1965, the relatively large Hurricane Betsy caused massive destruction and flooding and a number of deaths in and around the city and became part of local legend. Over the next forty years, the conditions for catastrophe have only been aggravated. All along, there were those few voices crying out in—and sometimes on behalf of—the wilderness, but their sound was so faint that few noticed their existence. Requests for increased funding for hurricane protection were made, but both Congress and a "fiscally conservative" administration could safely ignore the problem and fund imperialist adventures instead, given the lack of outcry for a solution on the part of such seemingly willing victims of the imminent catastrophe.

Another phenomenon that astounded Reclus was the level of crime and violence in antebellum New Orleans. He said that one town in the Wild West was apparently more violent, but apart from that one case, New Orleans was unsurpassed. He explains, "The night watchmen are far too few in numbers to be very effective in preventing disasters. . . . The most notorious criminals are hardly ever arrested, except when, emboldened by long success, they have the audacity to kill in broad daylight. Each year several hundred murders are committed and duly reported by the press, but they are rarely pursued by the judges. However, criminal activity is so excessive that, in spite of the casual nature of justice, 25,000 to 30,000 arrests are made each year." Nostalgic

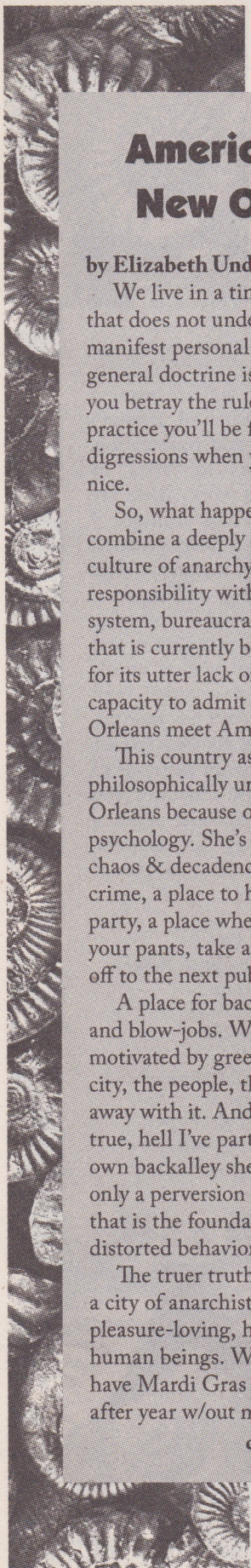


The motto of the grassroots mutual aid effort in New Orleans is "Solidarity Not Charity." If you're inspired by what's being achieved through radical compassion and cooperation, please express your solidarity by participating in this work. There are many ways to help. For example, if you're looking for a worthy vocation in life, please consider moving to New Orleans and making a long-term commitment to the work of restoring and regenerating our community and culture and fighting against ethnic cleansing, cultural destruction, and ecocide. Or if you have a few months, weeks, or even days to offer, please consider coming to work with one of the grassroots groups. Finally, if you can't come, please consider sending much-needed money or supplies. Here's information on two groups that need your support:

Mama D/  
Soul Patrol Neighborhood Relief  
1733 Dorgenois St.  
New Orleans, LA 70119  
504-723-7738

Common Ground Collective  
331 Atlantic Ave  
New Orleans, LA. 70114  
Phone: (504) 368-6897  
<http://commongroundrelief.org/>





## America Meet New Orleans

by Elizabeth Underwood

We live in a time and culture that does not understand, value, or manifest personal responsibility. The general doctrine is that if even if you betray the rules of your religious practice you'll be forgiven your digressions when you die, if you ask nice.

So, what happens when you combine a deeply entrenched culture of anarchy and individual responsibility with a political system, bureaucracy, cultural climate that is currently breaking records for its utter lack of introspection or capacity to admit mistakes? New Orleans meet America.

This country as a whole has never philosophically understood New Orleans because of this difference in psychology. She's been a symbol of chaos & decadence, indulgence & crime, a place to have your bachelor party, a place where you could drop your pants, take a crap, and stagger off to the next pub, ad nauseum.

A place for backalley drug deals and blow-jobs. Where politicians motivated by greed can jack off the city, the people, the system and get away with it. And all this stuff is true, hell I've participated in my own backalley shenanigans, but it's only a perversion of a truer truth that is the foundation for all of this distorted behavior.

The truer truth? New Orleans is a city of anarchists: self-governing, pleasure-loving, hard-working human beings. Why is it we can have Mardi Gras year after year after year w/out mass murders,

continued on page 10

southerners, as they wave their little confederate flags, still fantasize about an Old South that was all magnolias and mint juleps, rather than murder and mayhem. Fortunately, we have Reclus to remind us of the deep roots of our heritage of violence, which was itself rooted in long traditions of racism, complacent conservatism, and social injustice.

Our traditions continue. Today, there are still several hundred murders per year in New Orleans—in the worst year there were four hundred—in addition to similarly astronomical rates for many other crimes. So, it was not entirely surprising that in the chaos of the aftermath of Katrina there should be an outbreak of crime and violence. Many around the world were shocked by the media's depictions of widespread looting in the city after the storm and by later stories of mass desertions by the police and police participation in looting and theft.

Some New Orleanians were perhaps appalled—but also rather amused—by scenes of crowds carting off entire shelves of merchandise from stores as the police looked on, by reports that a military helicopter had been fired on, and by rumors that one of the major shopping malls had been emptied and then burned to the ground. Many New Orleanians have a sort of perverse pride at the idea that “almost anything can happen here,” and disaster stories of the extreme and the bizarre fed this feeling.

Others seemed to be caught in paranoid delusions, as in the case of wild stories of hundreds of bodies of shooting victims piled up in the Superdome. The coroner's office reported that in reality no one was shot there. A friend who lives in an elite section of the city passed on a rumor (no doubt the product of wishful fantasies of some in the neighborhood) that 600 looters had been shot dead by the police.

Other stories could produce only unmitigated horror in anyone, as in the case of elderly people who were abandoned to drown helplessly. It has been reported that the majority of the over one-thousand local storm victims were in their 60's or older. A friend circulated a harrowing story of wading through chest-high rising water looking for high ground, of seeing bodies floating in the water, and of observing addicts pushing a child's swimming pool through the floodwaters—they took turns getting into the pool to shoot up while the others pushed.

The great majority of the public accepted the fact that necessities should be taken from stores and used—but the ugly side of the free enterprise system was seen in frantic plunder of consumer goods for later resale. This was followed by legalized plunder as price-gouging took effect for essentials such as emergency repairs on roofs, and large corporations raked in windfall (sic) profits from juicy contracts as they subcontracted the actual work to hard-working but underpaid small businesses.

Among the nicknames for New Orleans are “the Big Easy” and “the City that Care Forgot.” Both reflect the fun-loving, carefree, hedonistic character of the city. While other cities adopt slogans such as “Proud to call it home,” bumperstickers in New Orleans proclaim, “New Orleans—Proud to Crawl Home.” This is, of course, a reference to the city's cult of alcoholic excesses, something Reclus observed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He said that he had never been anywhere with so many bars per inhabitant. He noted that “the city's more than twenty-five hundred taverns are always filled with drinkers, and fuel the most violent passions with brandy and rum.” In this area, New Orleans has changed markedly. The passions of the patrons of bars and nightclubs are now fueled not with brandy and rum, but rather with beer and whiskey, along with the vast array of drugs that they will obligingly be offered. Needless to say, among the few businesses to reopen in the weeks after the hurricane were a number of bars—and apart from hurricane

cleanup, this still seems to be the major form of commerce in the city six weeks after the disaster.

The mayor of New Orleans stated several days ago that it will be necessary for decision-makers



to “think outside the box” if the city is to recover successfully. He then proposed that the key to recovery would be reliance on tourism and shipping—the precise industries that the city has depended on almost exclusively for most of the past century. His one slightly innovative idea was to build more gambling casinos for the tourists, since they have hitherto had only two within the city plus a few more in the suburbs. So much for the boxed-in mind of his honor the mayor.

The mayor’s desperate hope that the city’s fortunes can be improved by betting on games of chance recalls Reclus’ comment on a certain economic delusion that he saw spreading in mid-nineteenth century America. “The American,” he notes, “is constantly on the lookout for opportunities, waiting for fortune to pass by so he can hop on and be carried away toward the land of Eldorado.” There is a sort of perverse or pathological logic to the mayor’s gamble. Year after year, we bet against the inevitable disaster—and finally lost. Maybe if we keep betting on and in the casinos, we’ll finally win.

To many people, indeed to the masses of people, the world usually seems like a game of chance. Accordingly, catastrophe always appears like something out of the blue. It seems like something rather—catastrophic! The reason for this is that the rules of the game remain carefully hidden. They are hidden by design, a design we call social ideology, and by a deeper design we call the social imaginary. However, if we make the effort we can gain insight into the nature of these designs, and into the character of the rules of the game. Catastrophe will then appear a bit less catastrophic in one sense—that of overwhelming disaster that seemingly comes from nowhere. But it will appear more catastrophic in the root sense of the term. “Catastrophe” comes from the Greek for “overturning.” A catastrophe thus overturns what has been built up, and it is more or less “catastrophic” according to the nature of the structures that have been built up. So, in order to understand the context of catastrophe, we need to understand the structures of domination that have created the conditions of catastrophe.

Reclus made an important contribution to just this kind of understanding. In reflecting on the problems of the city, he concluded that what he called the “urban question” is inseparable from the more fundamental “social question.” This question, as posed by classical anarchist theory, concerns the nature of the existing system of social domination and the possibilities for the creation of a free, just, ecological society to replace it. If we apply such an analysis to the present question, we will see that the true nature of the Hurricane Katrina disaster in New Orleans can only be understood in relation to the development of underlying, long-term social conditions. We will find that the disaster reflects in very specific ways the interaction of major forms of domination that were analyzed in great detail by Reclus, especially in his magnum opus of social geography, *L’Homme et la Terre*, but also throughout his works.

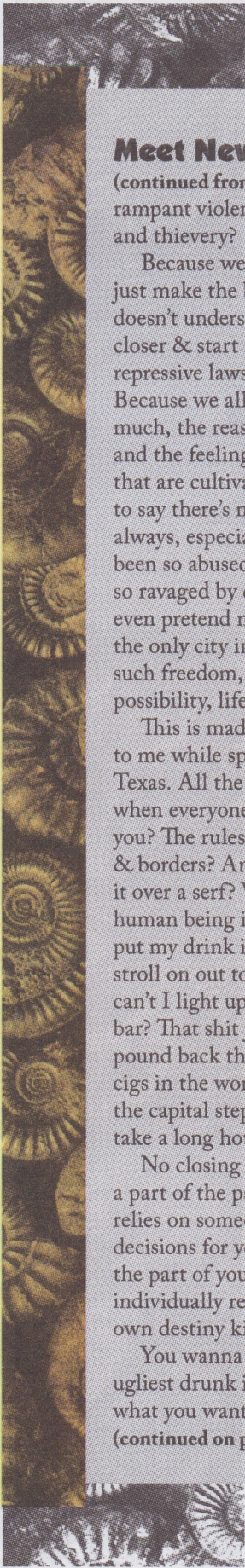
It relates especially to three of these forms of domination. The first of these forms is the state. Reclus attacked the state apparatus and its bureaucracy for being hopelessly inefficient, for aggravating the problems it claimed to solve, for oppressing people through arbitrary and abusive actions, and for concentrating power in the hands of irresponsible and often arrogant officials. The second relevant form is racism. Reclus was unusual among classical radical theorists in grasping racism as a major form of domination—an understanding that resulted in large part from his experiences in Louisiana. And the third form is capitalism. Though Reclus was scathing in his critique of the state, racism, patriarchy and other forms of domination, he was careful to identify capital as the overriding form in the modern period.

Though I can only sketch the outlines of an analysis in this brief communication, the Hurricane Katrina disaster reflects very clearly the dialectic between these forms of domination. The most obvious aspect has been the most blatant bureaucratic inefficiency of the various levels of government and of traditional aid agencies such as the Red Cross, in addition to the oppressiveness of the police. Only slightly less obvious has been the systemic racism that is

**In order to understand the context of catastrophe, we need to understand the structures of domination that have created the conditions of catastrophe.**







reflected in the greater impact of the disaster on the black community: the scandalously slow rate at which essential aid reached it; the comparatively low level of aid that was given; the long delays in restoring basic services; and the prevention of community members from returning to their neighborhoods.

## Meet New Orleans

(continued from page 8)

rampan violence, waves of rape and thievery?

Because we all know that would just make the bureaucracy that doesn't understand us look a little closer & start slapping a bunch of repressive laws on our traditions. Because we all love the party so much, the reasons for the party, and the feelings of sister/fellowship that are cultivated by the party. Not to say there's no dark side, there is, always, especially in a place that's been so abused by its politicians, so ravaged by classism you can't even pretend not to see it. But it's the only city in this country with such freedom, beauty, history, possibility, life.

This is made even more evident to me while spending time in Texas. All the rules? The "last call" when everyone starts screaming at you? The rules & regulations, lines & borders? An authority lording it over a serf? Why can't I, a free human being in a free country, just put my drink in a plastic cup & stroll on out to the taxi stand? Why can't I light up a cigarette in the bar? That shit just makes me wanna pound back the shots, smoke all the cigs in the world, drive my car onto the capital steps and stumble out to take a long hot piss right there.

No closing time? That makes a part of the psyche, the part that relies on someone else to make your decisions for you, relax. It asks that the part of you that wants to be individually responsible for your own destiny kick into gear.

You wanna be hungover like the ugliest drunk in the world? If that's what you want, go right ahead.

(continued on page 11)

Further below the surface, but even more deeply determining, are the priorities of capital and their effects. In New Orleans, we see a failure to invest in the social (and social ecological) infrastructure as quite appropriate from a capitalist standpoint for a community that works primarily in unskilled, labor-intensive, "service" industries such as tourism, food and beverage, entertainment, and gambling. The larger southeast Louisiana region, with its reliance not only on tourism, but on highly-polluting, socially undesirable petrochemical and extractive industry, must be seen as a semi-peripheral sector, a sphere of greater exploitation relative to investment, within a core economy. Furthermore, racist patterns of urban development have resulted in an extreme concentration of personal wealth outside the city limits, and reinforced segregation within it, so that the core city and the poorer areas within it become increasingly less significant from the standpoint of economic and political power—and thus more dispensable socially. At least, this is how things must necessarily appear from the systematically distorted perspective of the dominant system. Of course, that system doesn't grasp the organic connection between social and ecological phenomena. Occasionally, however, an event such as a major disaster offers some renewed hints that things are indeed connected.

I would like to elaborate a bit on one area of this analysis, not because it is more important than the other dimensions, but because it has been so obviously and scandalously on the surface. The Katrina disaster is a case study in the applicability of Reclus's observation in "The Modern State" that bureaucracy "impedes individual initiative in every way, and even prevents its emergence" and "delays, halts, and immobilizes the works that are entrusted to it."

Media around the world commented on the shocking ineptitude of the US government in helping victims of the disaster (I first read about it in a scathing editorial in the Times of India). The huge gap between the imperial state's ability to destroy life and its ability to save it became painfully evident. In Iraq, it can in a matter of minutes call in precision bombers to destroy a house suspected of harboring enemy combatants (often destroying much of the surrounding neighborhood and many of the neighbors in the process). But back in New Orleans, it was for days on end incapable of rescuing storm survivors begging for help—as shown repeatedly on international television reports. Around the world, viewers saw images of people stranded on housetops for days with signs bearing heart-rending captions such as "Please Help Us," "No Food or Water for Three Days," and "Diabetic—Need Medicine."

Large private bureaucracies—the Charity Establishment—seemed no more competent than the public ones. The Red Cross, which had raised almost a billion dollars in the early weeks after the disaster, was conspicuous by its absence in the areas of greatest need, including the city of New Orleans. I saw large numbers of Red Cross volunteers in airports on my way to the city, but few, if any, after I got back. Residents of the badly devastated Mississippi Gulf Coast reported a similar experience. Presumably, many Red Cross volunteers ended up in suburbia or in cities where evacuees were located, but in New Orleans, they were not to be seen.

For a long time, there was very little aid of any kind to some of the most devastated areas, which were most often those of poor and black communities. The city administration not only gave no official recognition or assistance to citizens' efforts at mutual aid



and grassroots cooperation, but instead engaged in active opposition to it. Citizens attempting to enter the city or to return after leaving were turned away at the city limits. At one point, I was taking an injured volunteer to a hospital outside the city limits (none were open inside the city) and was told that if I left I couldn't return. The same problem arose when leaving the city to seek supplies. For weeks on end, it was often necessary to try several routes back into the city before finding police or National Guard members who were flexible enough to allow volunteers through roadblocks.

Barring citizens from their houses and neighborhoods for over a month added to the initial devastation of the hurricane. Further needless destruction of homes and possessions took place during Hurricane Rita, the second hurricane to hit the city, as rainwater poured through damaged roofs, wind caused additional damage, mold continued to grow in water-damaged houses, and further looting took place in some areas. If there had not been a drought for the six weeks after Hurricane Katrina (with the exception of one day of heavy rain from Rita), destruction would certainly have been enormously greater.

During the crisis the state wreaked havoc not only by its exclusion of citizens from the city and its failure to deliver aid to storm victims, but also through its active persecution of those citizens who sought to save and rebuild their communities. Reclus in his important chapter of *L'Homme et la Terre* on "The Modern State" notes that "minor officials exercise their power more absolutely than persons of high rank, who are by their very importance constrained by a certain propriety." Consequently, he says, "the uncouth can give free rein to crass behavior, the violent can lash out as they please, and the cruel can enjoy torturing at their leisure." Such characteristics, so typical of those who govern us, have been abundantly exhibited during the hurricane disaster.

For example, both local and out-of-state police harassed 7<sup>th</sup> ward community leader Mama D for remaining in her neighborhood, which was under an evacuation order, and operating an autonomous community self-help project. She was cursed at, accused of being a prostitute, and threatened with arrest. Jeffrey Holmes and Andrea Garland have a building on the main street running through the Bywater neighborhood. The first floor, which was flooded in the hurricane, was an art gallery and a center for community-based activities. Jeffrey and Andrea took the artworks from the gallery and created a "Toxic Art Exhibit," consisting of damaged art works and political slogans, on the neutral ground (the New Orleans expression for "median") in front of their house. The exhibit was vandalized by the military that was patrolling the area and later removed by the authorities. The police later raided the house and arrested Jeffrey for "disturbing the peace"—a rather ironic, indeed ludicrous, charge considering he was arrested in his own home during the night and none of his immediate neighbors had yet returned after the storm. Also ironic was the fact that an interview with Jeffrey appeared on National Public Radio at 9:00 AM the next morning, with no mention of the fact that he had been arrested during the early hours of that same day.

A few days ago, three young people working at Mama D's—Wahid, Sandy, and Mama D's own son Ortega—went to look at a parking lot where Ortegas had parked his car on high ground before the hurricane to avoid flooding. He said that when he had returned earlier he had found that the cars that had been parked there had been looted by vandals. Wahid, who came with the Family Farm Defenders group from Wisconsin, decided to take photos at the

(continued from page 10)

You wanna stay at home & cut out stencils so you can make some art? It's your call. This is how society is supposed to work.

And it's also why New Orleans is getting royally screwed by politicians right now. Not one of them, from the venerable Mayor Ray Nagin to the questionable Governor Blanco to the absurd Mike Brown to the pathetic President George Bush, understands their role as servants to their constituency or really understands this lifestyle of anarchy.

But they are doing this: tossing the responsibility like a steaming hot turd from one to the other while New Orleans, that romantic and gloriously unique city desperately needs action.

But why be surprised by our culture at large that rejects the basic New Orleanian citizen. The basic New Orleanian citizens who have been able to return are the only ones responsible for those streets, the cafés, the animals, the trash. They're doing the work because that's just what you do. And they're being abandoned & abused by a local & federal government that is too cowardly to behave with such grace.


So what this means is there's absolutely no actual critique of the disaster taking place. It's not being encouraged or initiated on a major bureaucratic level that can result in any real concrete change in any way, shape, or form. Which means? If care forgot her before, it's justice forgetting her now.

—8 December 2005

*A former denizen of Detroit's Cass Corridor, artist Elizabeth Underwood is a New Orleans refugee, living in Austin, Texas at press time. This piece was excerpted from her amazing online journal.*

<http://croweau.typepad.com>





site to include in an article he was writing. On arriving, the three were confronted by police who forced them down to the ground, accused Ortigas of being a looter who was returning to loot again, kicked him in the side, held guns to the heads of all three, subjected them to verbal abuse, and then arrested them all for trespassing. The three had to spend the rest of the day and all night in an outdoor makeshift jail set up at the bus station and sleep—or attempt to sleep—on the pavement. The next day, they were told they had to plead guilty or be taken immediately to a state prison a hundred miles away. Similar stories of abusive behavior by police and arrests without cause are common.

So far, I have dwelled primarily on the negative—what we might call the disastrous side of the disaster. However, I would like to conclude with a few words on the positive side of this

experience: the extraordinary and inspiring efforts of local and outside volunteers; the reemergence and flourishing of grassroots community; and the creation of hope for a better and qualitatively different future. The weeks I've spent in New Orleans since the hurricane have undoubtedly provided some of the most gratifying periods in my life. Seldom have I felt so much gratitude for the goodness of people, for their ability to show love and compassion for others, and for their capacity to create spontaneous community.

Out of this disaster has come abundant evidence of the power of voluntary cooperation and mutual aid based on love and solidarity that Reclus described so eloquently. Mutual aid, he writes in *L'Homme et la Terre*, is "the principle agent of human progress." In his view, the practice of mutual aid would begin with small groups of friends—affinity groups, in effect—and extend out to larger and larger communities, ultimately transforming society as a whole. He expresses this perspective in a letter in which he appeals: "Let us found little republics within ourselves and around ourselves. Gradually these isolated groups will come together like scattered crystals and form the great Republic."

Elsewhere, he says that the anarchist must "work to free himself personally from all preconceived or imposed ideas, and gradually gather around himself friends who live and act in the same way. It is step by step, through small, loving, and intelligent associations, that the great fraternal society will be formed."

For Reclus, "Anarchy" means much more than its negative dimension of anti-statism, opposition to coercion, and rebellion against arbitrary authority. It is above all a positive practice of social transformation and social regeneration based on non-dominating mutual aid and cooperation. Furthermore, it refers not only to the free, cooperative society of the future, but also to every aspect of that society that can be realized in the present, "here and now." Reclus explains that "anarchistic society has long been in a process of rapid development," and can be found "wherever free thought breaks loose from the chains of dogma; wherever the spirit of inquiry rejects the old formulas; wherever the human will asserts itself through independent actions; wherever honest people, rebelling against all enforced discipline, join freely together in order to educate themselves, and to reclaim, without any master, their share of life, and the complete satisfaction of their needs."

I have found a great deal of this spirit of voluntary cooperation and concern for people's real needs—in short, the spirit of the gift—in New Orleans over the past month. The most inspiring aspect of the recovery from the disaster has been this grassroots, cooperative effort to practice mutual aid and community self-help. A vast spectrum of local and outside grassroots organizations have been at work in the recovery effort. These include the Rainbow Family, Food Not Bombs volunteers from several states, the Common Ground Collective in Algiers, the Bywater neighborhood collective, the Soul Patrol in the 7<sup>th</sup> Ward neighborhood, the Family Farm

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Defenders from Wisconsin, the Pagan Cluster, and groups of students from Prescott College in Arizona, Appalachian State in North Carolina, and other colleges and universities. Individual volunteers have come from throughout the US, from Canada, and from other countries, often linking up with local community groups or groups of volunteers from outside the state who are working with local groups. I felt great satisfaction when one young volunteer from a distant state said to me explicitly, "We came here to practice mutual aid." The Idea is still very much alive!

For the first week after my return, I worked primarily with the collective in the Bywater neighborhood of the city, which was inspired by the Common Ground project across the river in the Algiers neighborhood. My friend Leenie Halbert volunteered her house as the center for the group, which focused on preparing and distributing food to residents who remained in the city. A dozen or so volunteers stayed there or camped nearby and many more came by to help.

The Food Not Bombs group from New England joined the project, along with many other local and outside volunteers, including many anarchists. A reporter from the New York daily newspaper *Newsday* did an article on the group, describing his first encounter with "communitarian anarchists."

Leenie's house became a focus of social activity and hope in a largely deserted neighborhood and city. The food deliveries lifted the spirits of many and were essential to others who were isolated, such as the elderly man who had not heard about the hurricane and flood several weeks after the events.

After a break of several days to wait out the second hurricane and protect my house against water pouring through a seriously damaged roof, I joined community leader Mama D and the Soul Patrol in the city's 7<sup>th</sup> Ward neighborhood. Mama D has led a crusade to get citizens back into their neighborhoods—both to save their houses from further damage and to save their neighborhoods from planners and developers who would like to transform the racial, economic, and cultural character of the city by excluding many of the citizens. Some of the anarchists left Mama D's because of her allegedly hierarchical outlook. (Anyone who wastes time or who violates Mama D's high standards of culinary cleanliness gets "time out" the first time and banishment from the neighborhood along with a highly vocal cursing-out the second time.)

But most stayed and toed the line, along with an ever-growing group of additional volunteers. These included the busload of very hard-working young people from the "Family Farm Defenders" group in rural Wisconsin. After about a week of strenuous effort, the immediate neighborhood had been cleared of rubble. "Welcome Home" signs were placed on houses, and volunteers had begun to help returning residents to clean the insides of their houses. There was also continuing food distribution and mobile crews with tasks such as putting tarps on roofs, cutting and removing fallen trees and tree limbs, and clearing rubble. Mama D's had also become a center of social activity, with a constant flow of neighborhood people stopping by for food and other supplies, visitors from other neighborhoods, newspeople from various states and countries and documentary filmmakers, among many others.

One day, I had the privilege of driving Mama D to a City Council meeting that was held at Louis Armstrong International Airport, which is located very tellingly far out in suburbia, about fifteen miles from the city. She delivered a rousing fifteen-minute speech to the Council about the disastrous policies of excluding the citizens from their neighborhoods and the assault on poor and black citizens that was implicit in these policies. It's questionable what effect her eloquent words will have on the officials, but they will certainly continue to echo through the neighborhoods.

Perhaps predictably, the local monopolistic newspaper distorted everything she said in a report on the meeting. As I wrote in a (so far unpublished) letter to the editor "It is true that Mama D deplored the fact that 'able-bodied black men' were not being allowed to return to their communities in a time of need. However, it is absolutely false that she was 'aghast' that immigrant workers were brought in to work in the cleanup. In fact [she] expressed moral indignation over the fact that many of these workers were underpaid and were given no food, water or inoculations while on the job."

**The battle between truth and distortion goes on, as does the struggle between freedom and oppression.**





The battle between truth and distortion goes on, as does the struggle between freedom and oppression. Volunteers have set up two small community radio stations to shift the balance a little. Perhaps the time will come when we will finally create means of communication that our communities deserve—in this case as always, it's very good to see a beginning.

What might we conclude from these reflections? Reclus' philosophy of life was based on a deep love of humanity and nature and on a profound faith that the community of humanity and nature can be regenerated and liberated through personal and small-group transformation based on the practice of mutual aid and social cooperation. Though the Hurricane Katrina disaster has demonstrated the irrationality of the system of domination that Reclus analyzed so perceptively, it has also, in the forms of mutual aid and grassroots community that have emerged "in the midst of crisis," offered powerful evidence of the viability of his vision of a future society based on love, justice, and freedom.

If we are to carry on the spirit of Reclus, our conclusions will be exhibited not only in the ideas we hold, but in the feelings we experience and the lives we live.

Best wishes for an excellent conference!

Love and anarchy,  
John

## Post-Katrina: Anarchy Works; Government Fails

After the disaster that struck the Gulf Coast in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, during the total failure of the government response, the first health services available in New Orleans were set up by anarchists and local residents.

The hub of this mutual aid effort was the Common Ground clinic, operated from a mosque in the Algiers neighborhood by former Black Panther, Malik Rahim, local residents, out-of-town anarchists and other radical activists. While local, state and federal governments were in a state of chaos and incompetence, neighbors organized their own spontaneous mutual aid, helping to rescue people from flooded homes and procuring food and supplies. Even some bars in the French Quarter established themselves as DIY relief centers.

The anarchist response to the hurricanes has been an outpouring of mutual aid, solidarity, volunteers from all around the country, media, and much more. Within days of the hurricane, activists created an email list to coordinate relief efforts. Nationally, money was raised and supplies were acquired for relief caravans that streamed South to the afflicted areas.

Anarchists and medics left from Washington, D.C. and Asheville, N.C. to help start the Common Ground Clinic. Infoshop News covered the situation in New Orleans, the mutual aid efforts, and helped raise money for Common Ground and other anarchist relief projects. Providing food and medical care were the first priority. The Bay Area Radical Health Collective sent a vanload of medics, nurses, and doctors. Arizona and Hartford, Connecticut Food Not Bombs fed people along the Gulf Coast and in New Orleans. The Rainbow Family organized a café in Waveland, Miss. and two kitchens/clinics in New Orleans.

Several anarchists helped begin the Four Directions Relief Effort, a project that is organizing assistance for Gulf Coast native tribes who have been devastated by the hurricanes and years of capitalism, racism and government abuse.

Anarchists helped set up a media center and pirate radio station in the Algiers section and a low power FM operation in Houston. Cop Watch projects were established and anarchist activists helped tenants organize against heartless landlords.

This brief overview can't capture the full scope of anarchist actions in response to the hurricane tragedy. Relief and clean-up efforts are ongoing. Volunteers and donations are still welcome and needed by these alternative projects; check out their web sites and become part of the effort to show that anarchism works in the real world in a manner superior to government:

Common Ground Collective - [commongroundrelief.org](http://commongroundrelief.org); Four Directions Relief Effort - [intuitivepath.org/relief.html](http://intuitivepath.org/relief.html); Bay Area Radical Health Collective - [barhc.org](http://barhc.org); Infoshop - [infoshop.org/hurricanekatrina.html](http://infoshop.org/hurricanekatrina.html); Indymedia New Orleans - [nola.indymedia.org](http://nola.indymedia.org); Rainbow Emergency Management Assembly - [welcomehome.org/rema](http://welcomehome.org/rema); Food Not Bombs - [foodnotbombs.net](http://foodnotbombs.net).

—Chuck O, <http://infoshop.org>





## Psychic Liberation & the Almost Revolution

by Holly Jean

If you mention France, May 1968 today, you're probably met with a shrug or a blank look. It's easy to dismiss the ten million workers and students who went on general strike and the virtual shutdown of the French state as an historic blip. Another failed revolution.

But for the people who took part in those events, much more was going on—something besides a political uprising. Possibility bloomed. First hand accounts speak of a wave of mental liberation and spontaneous joy, with a sense that the old order of business had become obsolete overnight. How did reality shift so quickly into this new, liberated mood?

Then how, just as swiftly, at the end of May, did French President Charles de Gaulle cast a spell, shifting almost everything back to what had been like lights going on in a movie theater, its dazed participants rising from their seats to lumber home?

Basic recipe for May 1968: mix generally well-off students in a barracks-like suburban campus disgruntled with their education. Add general political dissent over the war in Vietnam and US globalization. Combine enraged students (*enrages*) with French workers, with their history of class

struggle, who want higher wages and a better standard of living—and *voilà*, an electrified revolutionary situation. In 1968, the students supplied the wit, the charm, and perhaps most importantly, the imagination. The workers supplied the "manpower," which the state interpreted as the real threat. This fusion of joyful whimsy and the specter of a workers' uprising is what brought the revolution to the ordinary person.

The question is: how does one maintain whimsy, wonder, and imagination, without being simply naive—and while getting things done on the physical plane? We have the 1968 model of fusing people with both imaginative and practical qualities in a sometimes-precarious partnership. We also have the model of the temporary autonomous zone, where people enter imagination-time for a night or a festival, and hopefully the energy of liberation carries through to ordinary states of consciousness often enough to keep us inspired.

These ordinary states of consciousness (the work-grocery-store-highway-madness states of consciousness) are not devoid of imagination, however. We still have imagination, but it's used against us. This is the world of myth, which plays



## **“Warning Lights”: on the Recent Riots in France**

For three weeks, in the ghettos of the poor suburbs, on the outskirts of the outskirts, thousands of cars were burned, public utilities devastated, troops of police deliberately attacked.

This is a movement without explicit demands. This is a movement impossible to reduce to ethnic or racial demands.

This is, moreover, a movement without spirit or class consciousness—a movement typical of those common uprisings that blur conventional distinctions: a movement of “imperative revolt” due to permanent poverty and daily humiliation. But it is also a movement without strategy, a movement more prone to gaze at itself on television screens, drawing its ephemeral strength from the media coverage it produces.

These riots are made by an unidentifiable mob; some are numbed by religion, many alienated by consumerism, or enthusiasts of masculine values, sharing with the masters of society the stupid worship of sport (some riots were suspended during televised football games).

In a society in which all previous forms of belonging, and therefore of associated consciousness, have been wiped out, these events testify to the eruptive and uncontrollable return of the social question, firstly under an immediately negative form, that fire—emblem of all apocalypses—symbolizes. In contrast to May '68, neither poetry nor brilliant ideas are on the barricades. No wildcat strike is going to spread widely with these troubles. But the rulers have been give a good hotfoot and have been forced to unmask themselves.

In a flash, such warning lights have revealed—during these November nights—the return of a possibility that seemed to be lost: that of throwing power into a panic even when its forces are harassed in a disorganized manner through the whole territory by a handful of forsaken social casualties.

—The Paris Group of the Surrealist Movement, excerpted from a longer statement, November 2005

an enormous role in human psychology, and what the authorities prey upon to manipulate our fears and desires.

In 1968, revolt was fed by myth, but Authority used myth as well to right the tottering state. On one side of the confrontation, you had heroic, beautiful, young students; on the other, cops in riot-helmets, looking like evil bug-aliens. The Paris street fighting was done with clubs and cobblestones, with barricades made of cars. In a sense, it was play-fighting, for a tank could have easily taken out any one of the makeshift fortifications. But the barricades were a symbol; they played to the mythos of the struggle, as they had in the revolutionary uprisings of 19<sup>th</sup> century France from 1848 to the Paris Commune.

Things were going well for the charismatic rebels until Charles de Gaulle broke in with a myth of his own—he *switched the plot* for the public, so to speak. When de Gaulle made a speech on May 24, 1968 asking the French people for their support, he seemed like a defeated old man. Five days later, de Gaulle disappeared. Dramatic tension was at a height. Then, he swept back into the country with an amazing speech. Declaring that he had a “mandate from the people,” he threatened to “use other methods than immediate national elections,” and invoked the menace of the Red Peril.

Within minutes, this speech shattered the revolutionary reality that had been developing. And, when the story changed, May-as-it-had-been began to disappear. The liberation and joy gave way to a tired mess, as Paris was faced with cleaning up after the party. *Move along, there's nothing to see.* That's the attitude; that's the disappearance of May; nobody died, and since we measure things in death tolls, nothing happened.

When people do remember May, it's for the brilliant graffiti and posters of revolutionary slogans, artifacts of the spirit of May, but they often forget that for several days a modern industrial state was brought to its knees. May is viewed today, when viewed at all, rather like the 1960s in general—a romantic, youthful fling, a necessary growing-up. But there was something real and authentic there, because an entire country was shut down and people in all sectors of society began to question the old assumptions and actually, if only for a while, live differently than they had. Reality actually did shift, and shifted back; events were psychologically reorganized. The storyline was revised, and the first version slowly vanished.

Like de Gaulle's May 30th speech, the current US government constantly tries to pull off reality-switches. They tried this by claiming there is a new, post 9/11 world, as if Reality was suddenly Different Overnight. They came up with the laughable Axis of Evil story, a creation so blatant that it is now a joke on late night television, and most sinister, they play on apocalyptic Christian myths as well as that of the pioneer single-handedly “taming the West,” rugged individuals pulling themselves up by their own bootstraps, Johnny-get-your-gun, and the rest of the rot.

However, this is only playing to one slice of the American mythical heritage. We've overlooked a lot of American myths we can use to our advantage that tells a story different from the official one. We need to appeal to that mythic archetype of the fiery abolitionist orator, the wild-haired suffragette, the Wobbly organizer riding the rails to the next strike, the union sit-in strikers, the civil rights marchers, and the anti-war, gay, and feminist militants of the 1960s.

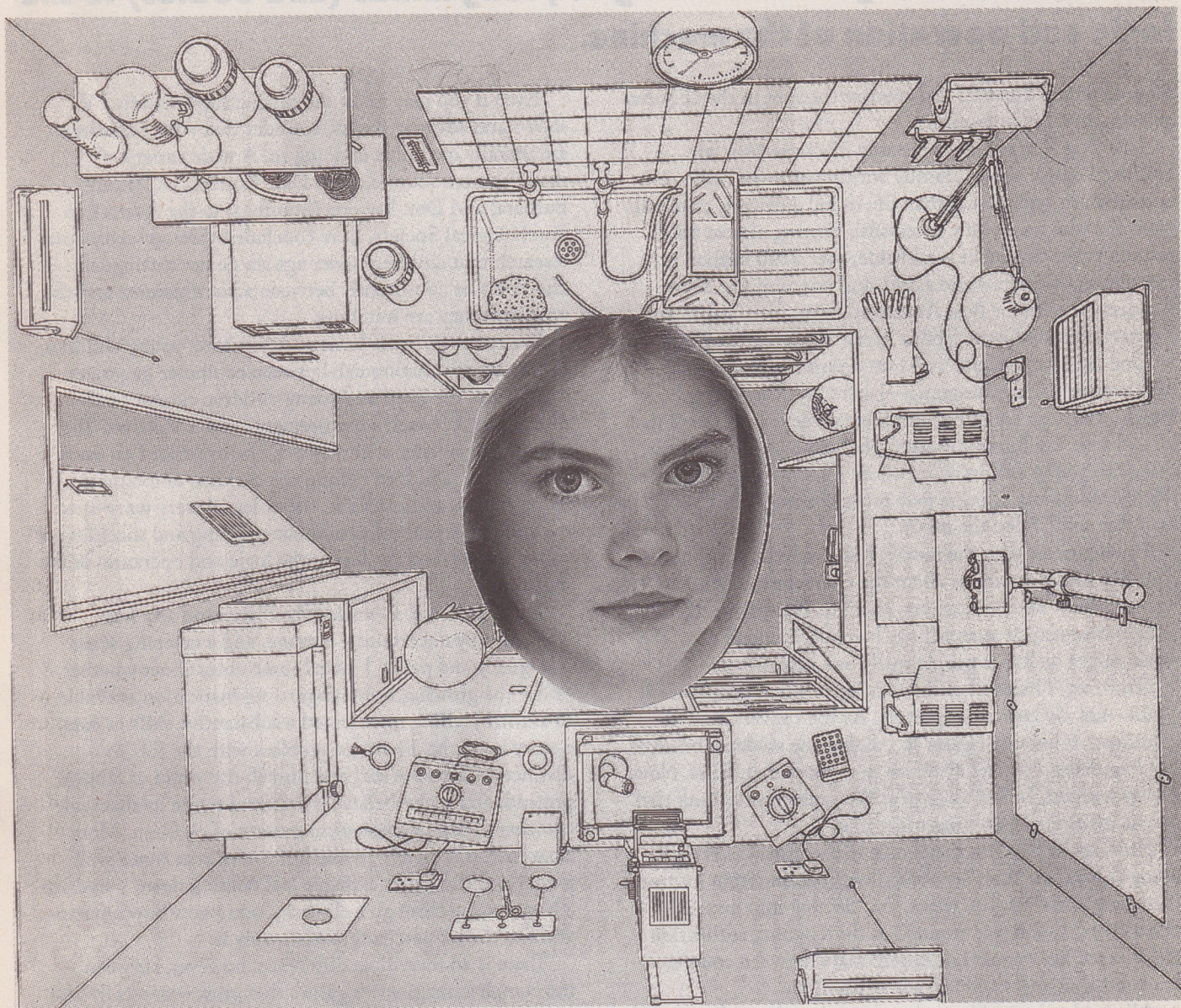
We can encourage a reality-shift, a switching-of-myths, if we work it right. Like the *enrages* of May '68, we can demonstrate that politics and life should be merry, as well as free and fair and peaceful. All of this leads back to imagination. It falls upon all of us to engage our imaginations—both for imagining new possibilities, and for creating new (or reworking old) myths for us to be written into.

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# Technology, Kids, and Autonomy

## The War Against Imagination



by Icarus Descending

In a classroom of five and six-year olds, I witness moments each day that vividly illuminate the tension and conflict within young minds struggling to understand their exposure to culture through mass media.

If survey data published in mainstream outlets like *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* are believed accurate, let's consider the following: a television is on an average of nearly eight hours every day in US households, of which the average child watches 28 hours per week, viewing an average

of 20,000 commercials per year. The imagery these numbers conjure is terrifying; any anti-authoritarian educational praxis (the combined process of action and reflection) must grapple with this fabricated reality or is simply irrelevant. We'll get to that later.

First, here's a brief anecdote revealing the extent of the problem we face as anarchist parents and educators, as human beings who give a damn about authenticity of experience, free emotional and psychological development, and the potential



**The sum of this sinister arithmetic can be overheard on every playground, is hidden behind the curtains of too many living rooms, and is seen in the aisles of every teary-eyed toy store tantrum: the systematic molding and shackling of young minds (and bodies) to the logic and operation of the machine.**

for autonomous, critical and creative thought in the children growing in our communities.

Last year Pixar Studios released *The Incredibles*, an animated movie about a family with superpowers who re-emerge from typical suburban life to foil a devious criminal plot. The film was wildly successful, earning almost \$800 million at the box office worldwide, over \$700 million in video revenue (rentals and sales), and winning the 2004 Academy Award for Best Animated Film. Needless to say, the movie created quite a buzz in our kindergarten classroom.

One day, the students and I sat around talking about how everyone's day was going—listening, questioning, interrupting and laughing—and one student mentioned that he had seen *The Incredibles* the night before. As is often the case with young children, for whom a simple appreciation of the joys or desires of peers may prove elusive, a chorus of "I've seen that too!" filled the room.

Having never seen the movie, I proceeded from genuine curiosity to ask questions about the characters, plot and what students liked or disliked about it. Planting seeds for imaginative play or storytelling, I wondered aloud what the world might be like if people really had superpowers.

Grinning, I listened to the kids' beliefs that people really could—no, *did* have superpowers. As the conversation continued, it became clearer to me that the students believed *The Incredibles* provided evidence to support that belief. Now, a little worried, I tried to clarify: "You mean, you think that people really could do things like that?"

No, they responded, the people in the movie *were* really doing things like that: becoming invisible, shooting ice from their hands, walking on water, and turning into metal. I delved further and was stunned at the dawning realization that the students could not differentiate between computer-rendered characters and live actors on film.

All children's movies produced, marketed and distributed by corporations are carefully designed sales delivery systems. They exist to sell: from box office receipts and DVD sales to fast food tie-ins, brand promotion, and an unending assortment of merchandise, kids' movies exist to create or invigorate consumer markets and generate profit.

Secondarily, but of no less importance, they sell ideology: even the most banal animated features transmit the social values and expectations of dominant culture, from gender stereotypes to the necessity of hierarchy to the role of violence in resolving conflicts. Since you are reading the *Fifth Estate*, this information probably comes as little surprise. But there's more.

Even if you may make the distinction between TV shows and advertisements, consider that young children are literally incapable of doing so. A wide variety of establishment sources, from Dale Kunkel (UC-Santa Barbara) and Don Roberts (Stanford) to the Australian Psychological Society, have concluded through exhaustive research that children under age six do not distinguish effectively or consistently between advertisements and the programs they are watching.

Wait, let's do some basic addition here: young children cannot readily distinguish between computer-generated images and life itself *and* young children cannot easily distinguish between advertisements and TV shows. The sum of this sinister arithmetic can be overheard on every playground, is hidden behind the curtains of too many living rooms, and is seen in the aisles of every teary-eyed toy store tantrum: the systematic molding and shackling of young minds (and bodies) to the logic and operation of the machine.

Later, at home, I recalled the discussion and was overtaken by uncertainty, outrage, and a creeping sense of urgency and panic. I jotted some notes about whether or not the growing technological sophistication available to aid storytelling represented a substantive shift in *how* a story is taught. I have no problem with the fragile distinction between real and unreal: the world of fantasy, pretend, and make-believe is essential to the intellectual, emotional, and psychological growth of children. More than that, it is an end in itself: if you've ever *been* a wolf howling at the moon, a maple leaf floating down a river, or a bird soaring through a clear sky, you know how amazing and fun the human imagination truly is.

There is an incredible difference, however, between the complex imaginative games that grow organically and spontaneously from the minds of children—or, for instance, the oral storytelling traditions of many indigenous cultures the world over—and the coercive, calculated blurring of the distinction between fantasy and reality by entities concerned, above all else, with perpetuating the social, economic and psychological systems of domination that we as anarchists make it our lives to subvert and struggle against.

Clearly, this is an authoritarian approach based squarely on a lack of trust and respect for the lives of children, a denial of their ability to exercise power in decisions that directly affect them, and a complete failure to cultivate critical thinking skills. This strategy bears striking



resemblance to the fear-mongering and heavy-handedness of abstinence-only sex education. Advocates delude themselves into thinking they can prevent sex by carefully controlling and managing accurate technical information about sex and its consequences, as well as limiting the availability of birth control. See the "Just Say No" approach to drug (mis)education for a similarly styled and equally unsuccessful (on terms defined by their proponents) attempt at behavioral control. What possible solutions are there to this problem? Do you deny kids access to certain television shows, or to TV altogether? Avoid or downplay discussion of television in the classroom?

Of course, you say, the solution lies elsewhere—somewhere more closely aligned with our anti-authoritarian politics. We should provide as much information to children as possible, openly declare our biases, share our experiences and perspectives, express our values, answer their question, "Why?" to the best of our ability as many times as it is asked, admit when we are unsure or don't know, relate our fears and hopes, share our love and—after all of this—give them the space to make decisions, act, and experience the consequences.

Even though this process can be described in few words, we know how dynamic and challenging it can be in everyday life. Perhaps it occurs to you that children must be protected because they appear and, in many ways, truly are so vulnerable. We value security—but at what cost? Security at the expense of freedom is more than an unacceptable compromise: it is slavery, self-prostration before fear.

To look at it another way: Odds are that kids raised in a vegan household are at one time or another going to eat a cheeseburger. It happens. This can be experienced in a variety of ways. For example, it can be a totally transgressive act if veganism was framed in the child's mind as a strict prohibition fed by endless reassurances that, "trust me, you're not missing much;" and, "you'll thank me later," and "it's for your own good."

Imposed security. Powerlessness. Suddenly, liberation becomes a cheeseburger. Juxtapose this with the fact that young children are, developmentally, more susceptible to the manipulative power of advertising, add the biochemical addictiveness of sugary, salty, fatty foods, and—for good measure—imagine this cheeseburger came from that darling of semiology, the giant golden-arched M.

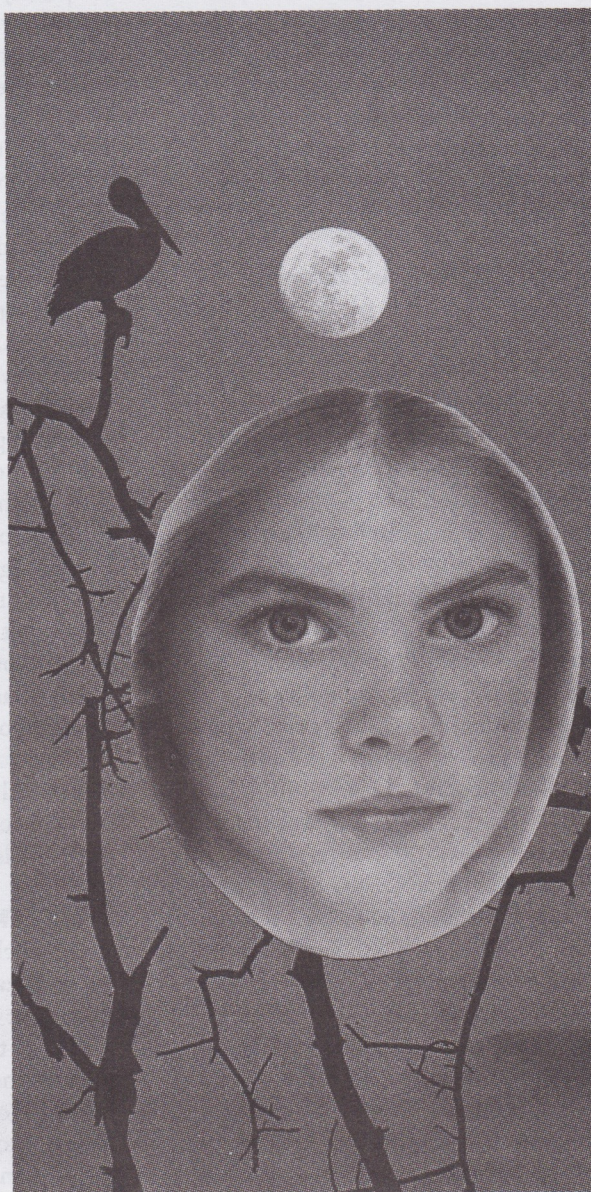
Asking a five year old to fend for herself given—well, given *everything*—rests on a faulty assumption that she is on equal footing (psychologically, emotionally, etc.) with the worst of the toadies oiling the gears of global mass consumption. And, they have new tools, like the ever-growing sophistication of computer-generated imagery to tell stories, sell products, and transmit ideology.

Children are dependent on adults to provide for a wide variety of needs, from food and shelter to nurturing and love. In all of our interactions and relationships with children, we must actively, conscientiously work against creating unnecessary and harmful dependencies, or sacrificing their

freedom and responsibility for the satisfaction of our sense of their safety or security.

Whether the impulse is authoritarian or anarchist, acting or speaking *for* children can be fundamentally disempowering: it discourages creative and critical thinking, denies the joy of autonomy and stifles the development of an authentic understanding of the relationship between thought, action, and consequences.

If this awareness, these expectations and values are not allowed to flourish in the minds of children alive today, there is no hope of halting the march of progress, of turning the tide against our culture of death, of building genuine relationships among each other and with all other creatures of the earth.





# NO BORDERS: LOVE, LIBERATION, & THE INTERNAL REVOLUTION

by Anu Bonobo

"In any form of duality, the one we have judged as inferior is the one that rules us."  
—Rodolfo Scarfalloto

**O**f all the intoxicating notions of insurrection, "without borders" is one of the most enduring. The toppling of walls, the deletion of divisions, the repudiation of alienation and separation remains an ever-elusive vision and immediate attraction.

Yet, authentic abolition seems impossible to achieve through a decaying vortex of politics and activism. However, even those who negate politics with various anti-theories that pose as the one, true negation seem no more prepared to push past the either-or rubric that renders revolution a battle between reformist dreams and reactionary violence.

Somehow, the obvious outcome of eradicating alienation is frightening: diving from a cliff into the deep water of hope and heresy. External revolutions always promise a kinder, gentler enslavement. Radical obligation becomes a new master, complete with rituals of denial, talismans of self-sacrifice, and calls to martyrdom. The construct of activism can feel like going to a day job, without any of the meager benefits.

From the binary, dualistic trap of purely political and military revolutions, only one beast survives: the enemy within. Cut off from the emotional reality of interconnection, the anti-corporate activist becomes a mini-corporation, the anti-statist becomes a mini-state, the anti-militarist becomes a militia of one. Like the mythic serpent always sucking its own ass, we come full circle. Rebellions become the repression of the next rebellion. The father's son always becomes his daughter's father. The repressed child becomes the oppressive parent, and the cycle continues.

What about the internal revolution? This revolution requires a different kind of commitment. What if we kept fighting by refusing to live in an either/or reality?

Borders have always been the problem—

the primary delusion, the hierarchical apex of human social arrogance—but why do we respect them so? Why do we erect them internally, even when we labor to abolish them externally?

The entire legacy of the ultra-left has hinged on an "us-them" fiction. At least, we are not like them. Forever washing our hands of their sins, we purify ourselves like monks. The fictions of deep social divisions are costly for those on the losing team. But for us as a species, they never existed as an ultimate reality. Such notions only serve those in power.

Our chosen narrative of resistance is in fact a fantasy, a facile feat of fatality. It's an immature fantasy. Because if we lose, they must win or if they lose, we must win. Why do people who espouse a transcendence of competitive values so frequently fetishize triumph? The new boss is the narcotic notion of victory. It's also always already a violent fantasy. On this one-dimensional trajectory of so-called history, the battle always requires bloodshed. Might the real refuseniks map entirely new terrain?

## Is Love All We Need?

When we chart a new language of the possible, we can add new words to our deepest yearning. Yes, we can make radical our expressions of emotion. We can revolutionize as vectors of love.

In "The Meming of Love," advocate of "emotional literacy," Claude Steiner, considers the chronic curtailing of compassion created by the institutions of repression, "a persistent system of supremacy of men over women, the powerful over the weak, of the middle aged over the young and elderly. This ancient tradition also known as patriarchy includes the domination of the emotions and threatens people with dire consequences if they fail to keep those emotions in control. Love is a particular target of patriarchal control because in its many forms it challenges and threatens patriarchal domination." Steiner sees love as the most potent weapon to topple domination, not through protracted conflict but through profound community.

Of course, "love is all you need" is the oldest, most obvious pop-culture cliché. Yet love is also the only libation that can seed authentic liberation. Perhaps love should become prerequisite in forming affinity groups, in creating a vocabulary for sustainable solidarity. How can we speak of freedom without speaking of love? How can we speak of revolution without speaking of love? Will we go back to splitting hairs and spitting corpses?

From the barricades to the bedroom, another seed will germinate, forming the bedrock of the new world, a communal heart beating, the flower of passion and friendship and fierce, unconditional love.

## The Interpersonal is Political

So much talk about bringing the war home, we may have forgotten that the war is already home. For generations, the domestic sphere has been drastic and tragic, the definition of un-safe space.

For all the study groups on the important texts of history, theory, and struggle, how many collectives devote a day a month to promote emotional health? How many hours per week should we commit to loving, playful, frivolous touch? Do we eat together, dance together, make art together, plan celebrations together? Does your household, commune, collective, infoshop, or



reading room offer classes on healing, healthcare, daycare? Do we teach each other how to play fair?

Why do most attempts to reconcile the radical and the emotional get feminized and side-tracked, postponed while the real radicals engage in some real revolutionary work?

The DIY idea has fostered fabulous and festive gestures in mutual aid, in free education, in horizontal networks and skillshares. Can this notion be extended perpetually and perennially to posit the communal, emotional needs of the people as a primary revolutionary objective?

## Feeling Gravity's Pull

Like a ripe apple wants to fall from a tree, babies want to be held and loved. Adults are not that different. Like gravity, love is a law in the ecology of humanity.

Of all the primal attractions and primary mysteries of human culture, nurturing and understanding the necessary pull between parent and child remains crucial. Theories of pleasure, touch, and healthy development in children based on peaceful, loving, and appropriate affection contribute to mature, convivial, independent, and interdependent communities.

After doing extensive scientific studies of the impact of "mother love" cross culturally, James Prescott concludes in "The Origins of Human Love and Violence":

"It is this form of culturally induced brain dysfunction/damage that accounts for the massive history of violence, human inequality and injustice which has so characterized the ancient and contemporary histories of patriarchal homo sapiens. Human physical affectional love which is mutually shared neutralizes power in human relationships and provides for the neurobiological and neuropsychological foundations for egalitarian, peaceful and harmonious behavior in human relationships."

If we come to grapple with love as part of the sustainable biology of community and self, we might begin to see the hug differently, the handshake dialectically. Indeed, the warm, fuzzy, and hopeful remark is a kind of ecodefense. Moreover, protecting our spirits against insecurity, insult, and insanity can be seen as a kind of tactical action. Why not do for the old fashioned idea of "feeling good about ourselves" what we'd do for an old-growth forest? Why not unlearn the rationalist, masculinist insistence on thought over feeling? Why not accept that humans need love like riverbeds need water and dispense love generously as part of the generalized gift economy?

## Sticking it to the Straw Man

"People who talk about revolution and class struggle without referring explicitly to everyday life, without understanding what is subversive about love and what is positive in the refusal of constraints, such people have a corpse in their mouth." —Raoul Vaneigem

Vaneigem warned us. But why do we quote him and quibble among ourselves—plotting, frothing, fulminating? Do we think that the anarchist gathering is the one true gathering? From the impoverished Id of failed revolutions, why give birth to purist ideologies to disprove other purist ideologies?

Stuck in the revolving door of an anti-religion, critics preen their radical pedigree, killing hope with another diatribal. Sucking us into another personal attack on the naïve nice-isms of New Age sages, some badass junior Bakunin will bust our chops with another of his more-radical-than-



—collage by Chris McClarren

thou theories. In our collectives and our households, we bicker, back-bite, and backstab to the extent that we dull our dreams, dampen our desires, and forget what we are fighting for.

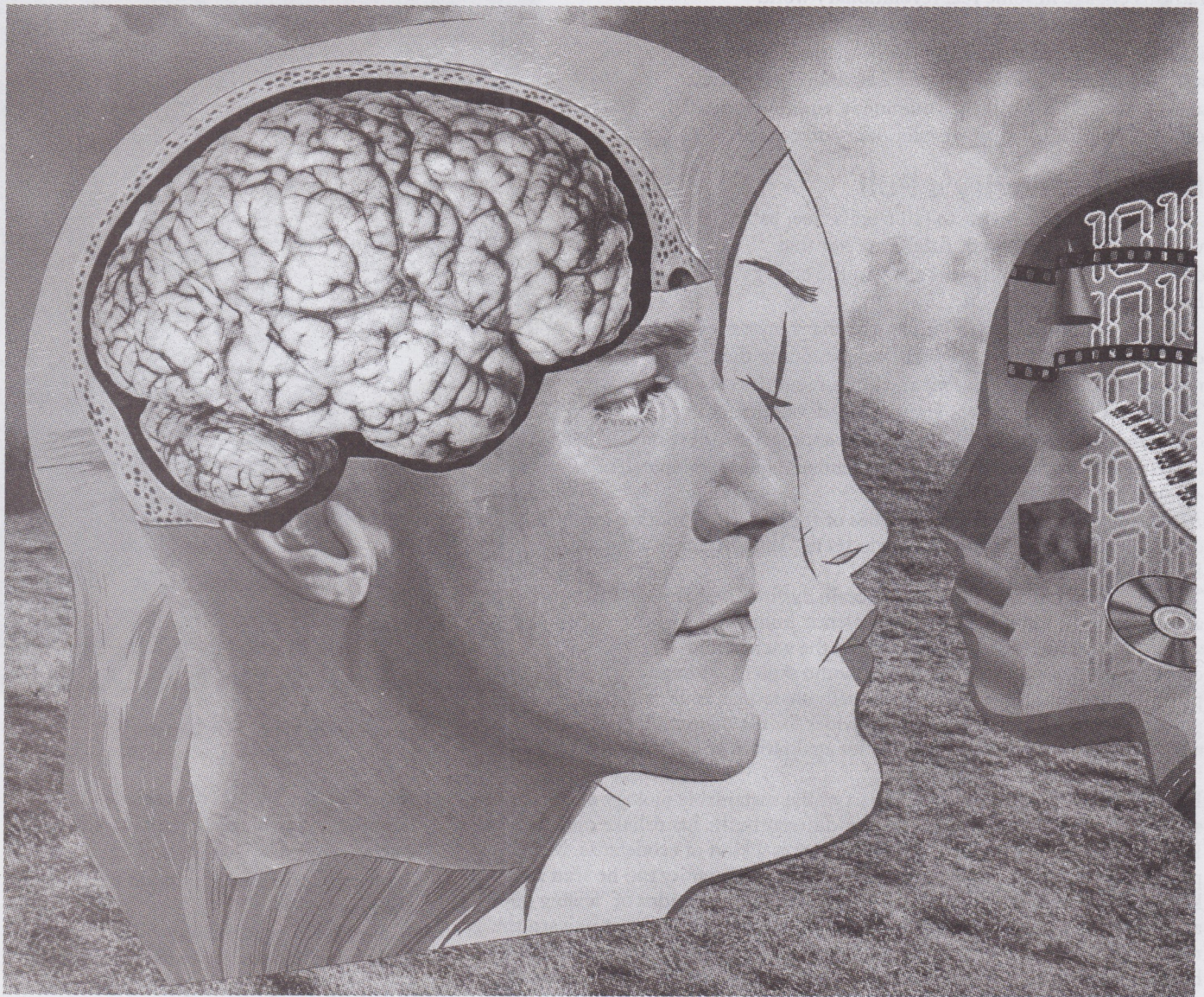
I refuse to fight the war within the movement. To give name to this syncretic and eclectic impulse for peace within our pitifully small milieu, I recently called for an idea I called "ecumenical anarchy." This notion gained some notoriety in the form of ridicule from both my friends and critics. Later, I realized I wanted something far more utopian than that: eclectic, syncretic, and ecumenical anarchy proved far too limiting a vision. When I tried to pass this peace pipe and no one smoked with me, I decided I was trying too hard to be right. So I gave up the fight. I refused to be correct or defend my position. I'm not peddling an ideology or shopping for one. I'm going back to un-school.

I've decided to become a conscientious objector to the war within myself.

—Winter Solstice 2005, Pumpkin Hollow



# RITALIN TURNS FIFTY



by Benjamin Shepard

If there is one enduring memory from my childhood, it is a small porcelain bowl containing three little white pills. The pills were as ubiquitous as morning orange juice and cereal. "Ben, don't forget your Ritalin," my mother would remind me as I rushed to meet my carpool on time.

"Don't forget your Ritalin." On any given day, some five million children and adolescents in the United States are given a psychostimulant of one form or another. The theory is that these drugs help young people handle their emotions, feelings, and reactions.

This situation is like no other in the world. More American children and adolescents receive diagnoses of attention deficit disorder (ADD) than in any other country, and these diagnoses are often followed by prescriptions for medications such as Ritalin. The US and Canada together account for some 95 percent of the global market for Ritalin for the treatment of ADD. The number of kids prescribed these medications has only accelerated in recent years.

Ritalin first came on the market in 1955. Some fifty years later, 29 million prescriptions have been written for it to treat



# CONFESSIONS OF A TEENAGE JUNKIE

ADD, or “hyperactivity,” as the condition was generously described back in my day. Of these, 23 million prescriptions have been for children who have little choice but to take these medications, regardless of how doped up the drugs make them feel.

Ritalin (methylphenidate) has the same effect on the brain and behavior as other forms of amphetamine, and may cause side effects including irritability, psychosis, hallucinations, mania, and aggression. Conversely, other users of the drug find themselves feeling worn down, even lethargic or depressed.

In addition, Ritalin may promote suicidal thoughts and can lead to addiction; some research suggests a link to cancer. Thus, it is not surprising that Ritalin may actually cause the same problems it is purportedly intended to address: poor attention, impulsivity, and even increased hyperactivity. Most disturbing, the drug has been linked to changes in brain functioning that remain long after the therapeutic effects have dissipated.

I was diagnosed with dyslexia as a “hyperactive” child in the spring of 1976. I squirmed, bounced out of my seat, and had a difficult time with my schoolwork. I spent the next three years—second through fourth grade—in schools for children with learning and speech disabilities. Medications were a core part of my treatment.

I was prescribed Ritalin and Dexedrine to help me settle down and get to work (toward getting into a more competitive prep school). Even at that age, the social push to succeed and compete was vexing. School is, after all, a socialization process, churning ever forward and Ritalin and Dexedrine function quite nicely within this milieu.

By fifth grade, in 1980, I was mainstreamed. My medication dosages increased, and so did the side effects. My doctors prescribed Ritalin and Dexedrine, both “uppers,” in an effort to help me calm down. In practice, they made me crazy.

Voices sometimes echoed through my head like bells chiming in a cathedral. I could hear multiple voices and conversations chattering away in my head. Even now, almost 25 years later, I still vividly remember the intensity of that chorus-line of overlapping monotone voices. On the flip side, the voices were so busy inside my head that even talking with other school kids, something that had never been a problem before, became difficult.

Oddly, this never merited a peep of concern from any of the cavalcade of doctors, psychiatrists, family therapists, and social workers I met during those years. It was all supposed to be very common. “The voices are getting worse,” I explained to the doctor who prescribed the pills. He was not all that interested in listening.

The synergistic doctor/patient partnership—in which patients and doctors consult with each other—was not really in place in 1980, prior to the era of AIDS activism. Even

now, I doubt this democratic process applies to ten-year-old children and their doctors. The pills just kept coming, and I continued to feel sped up and muddled down at the same time.

In 1982, when I was in seventh grade, the film *Quadrophenia*, based on the album by The Who, was showing at a local repertory theater. It told the story of British youth pulled in so many different directions that they felt not just schizophrenic—with their personalities split in two—but quadraphenic.

The protagonist Jimmy was a Mod, a member of a British youth subculture known for fighting with a rival youth group known as the Rockers, and terrorizing everyone else during British sea weekends on Brighton Beach in the early 1960s. Mods wore Zoot Suits; Rockers wore leather. I immediately gravitated toward the Mods.

Jimmy and the other stylish Mods ate handfuls of pills—Reds, French Blues, mostly amphetamines—and zapped around town on their scooters. For all I know, they were eating Dexedrine itself. It was the first time I had ever seen an image of the pills, which had become such a fixture of my life, featured in popular culture. Yet instead of fulfilling their makers’ tedious aim of socialization, these pills fueled the high-octane culture of sex, fashion, and eventually riots between the Mods and the Rockers.

Like everything else, the pills were a commodity. They functioned liked currency. When Jimmy had pills, he also had girls and friends. Maybe it could work the same for me.

By eighth grade in 1983, I took the lesson of the Mods to heart, imitating their fashion and their enthusiastic use of stimulants. I had access to any junkie’s dream—an endless supply of prescribed speed, with a doctor happy to provide bottle after bottle. Instead of following prescribed dosages, I began to use the pills as speed, and basically stopped sleeping for the next four years. If I was running late completing a school paper, I would pop a couple more pills and stay up all night and into the next day without a blink.

Once I began using the pills as speed, the strange isolated internal feeling faded. I started giving them to girls and to my friends, and my problems with social issues receded. If pills were a currency, eighth grade biology lab was a currency exchange. On some days we’d try Valium and Ritalin, on others it would be Xanax. I could eat Xanax like popcorn and it didn’t do a thing.

I stopped taking the pills out of pure boredom when I entered college in the fall of 1988. By then, it was some ten years since I first started. Certainly, no one had put a gun to my head to force me to take the meds. Most days, I was up until the middle of the night; then, I took a few more pills to wake up, and a couple more throughout the day to re-stimulate myself. I was never quite sharp.

Actual class time was pretty fuzzy. Whether this was from the lack of sleep, any of the pills, inhalants, joints, or other



# As hysteria about speed and crystal methamphetamine reach a fever pitch, few are talking about the legalized amphetamines children are prescribed every day.

compulsions, such as high school football, I do not know. But within a couple of years with regular sleep, my interest in and ability to actually take in class materials increased.

## Looking Back

I'm glad I stopped taking the pills. Other people I know from those days are still on some form of pharmacological treatment for dyslexia, but now combined with antidepressants. In this respect, Ritalin is like a drug manufacturer's dream. Find a caring and concerned mother like mine, have a doctor tell her there's an answer to her child's problems, and the kid starts a medication which may be the beginning of a lifetime of pharmacological solutions to life's difficulties.

As a proponent of harm reduction, I am opposed to the harms associated with drug use, not drug use per se (of either over- or under-the-counter medications). What is difficult to swallow is the idea of trading good parenting and creativity for Ritalin. There are other schools of thought that call for stimulating and supporting the interests and imagination of children, rather than controlling their behavior. The U.S. is the only country in the Western world that routinely treats normal childhood high energy with medication.

In the years since I last took Ritalin, the number of prescriptions for the drug has increased exponentially. While I was diagnosed with dyslexia, the "hyperactivity" I experienced is now referred to as a distinct disorder: attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD, or simply ADD). According to the National Institute of Mental Health, ADHD is the most frequently diagnosed childhood disorder, affecting three to five percent of all grade-school age children. Other sources suggest the number is closer to ten percent. And in some regions of the country, fully 50 percent of children are diagnosed with the condition. The question is never asked, however, why it is that so many young people cannot adjust to what is considered normative behavior.

As hysteria about speed and crystal methamphetamine reach a fever pitch, few are talking about the legalized amphetamines children are prescribed every day. While the War on Drugs continues to enjoy generous support from Congress, the Journal of the American Medical Association has documented an inordinate increase in the number of two- to four-year-olds taking Ritalin and other mood-altering drugs. It is not a stretch of imagination to understand that legal mood-altering medications often lead to misuse, while becoming gateways into illegal drug use. Although Ritalin is packaged with a warning against use by children younger than age six, doctors across the country continue to prescribe it—and one rarely sees the vice squad invading their offices.

## Backlash

I'm certainly not the first writer to suggest that the governmental, corporate, and medical support for the over-prescription of mood-altering medications resembles the official attitude toward soma, the drug that controlled people's thoughts in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. "Why don't you take soma when you have these dreadful ideas of yours? You'd forget all about them. And instead of feeling miserable, you'd be jolly. So jolly. . .," one character advises another in the novel. But highs and lows are part of life.

If we miss them, we miss the moments of exquisite brilliance as well. The current impulse to medicate away the high energy of youth with Ritalin, the pain of grief with Prozac, and everything in between limits these possibilities.

Within this context, it is not surprising that a backlash is afoot. Consider the notion of "Indigo Children." As Wendy H. Chapman explains: "Indigo Children are the current generation being born today and most of those who are eight years old or younger. They are different. They have very unique characteristics that set them apart from previous generations of children. . . These are the children who are often rebellious to authority, nonconformist, extremely emotionally and sometimes physically sensitive or fragile, highly talented or academically gifted and often metaphysically gifted as well, usually intuitive, very often labeled ADD, either very empathic and compassionate or very cold and callous, and are wise beyond their years."

Instead of addressing these issues, kids are being given prescriptions for more medications to keep the complaints down. Whether or not we're dealing with a new breed of youth, there has to be another way of working with those the school system designates as "problem" children besides feeding them drugs.

In a recent review of Stephen Rose's *The 21st-Century Brain*, Jacob Stevens offers a materialist framework for the use of Ritalin: "The drug does make the majority of children calmer in class, but without addressing the causes of disruptive behaviour. The trend, as Rose argues, is towards the privatization and chemical suppression of a range of societal issues: 'trying to adjust the mind rather than adjust society.'"

He concludes: "In this context, Rose's political and scientific opposition to the current social experiment with Ritalin—sedating a psychological underclass that strongly overlaps with the socially and economically marginalized—should be supported." (*New Left Review*, May-June 2005)



by Fritz

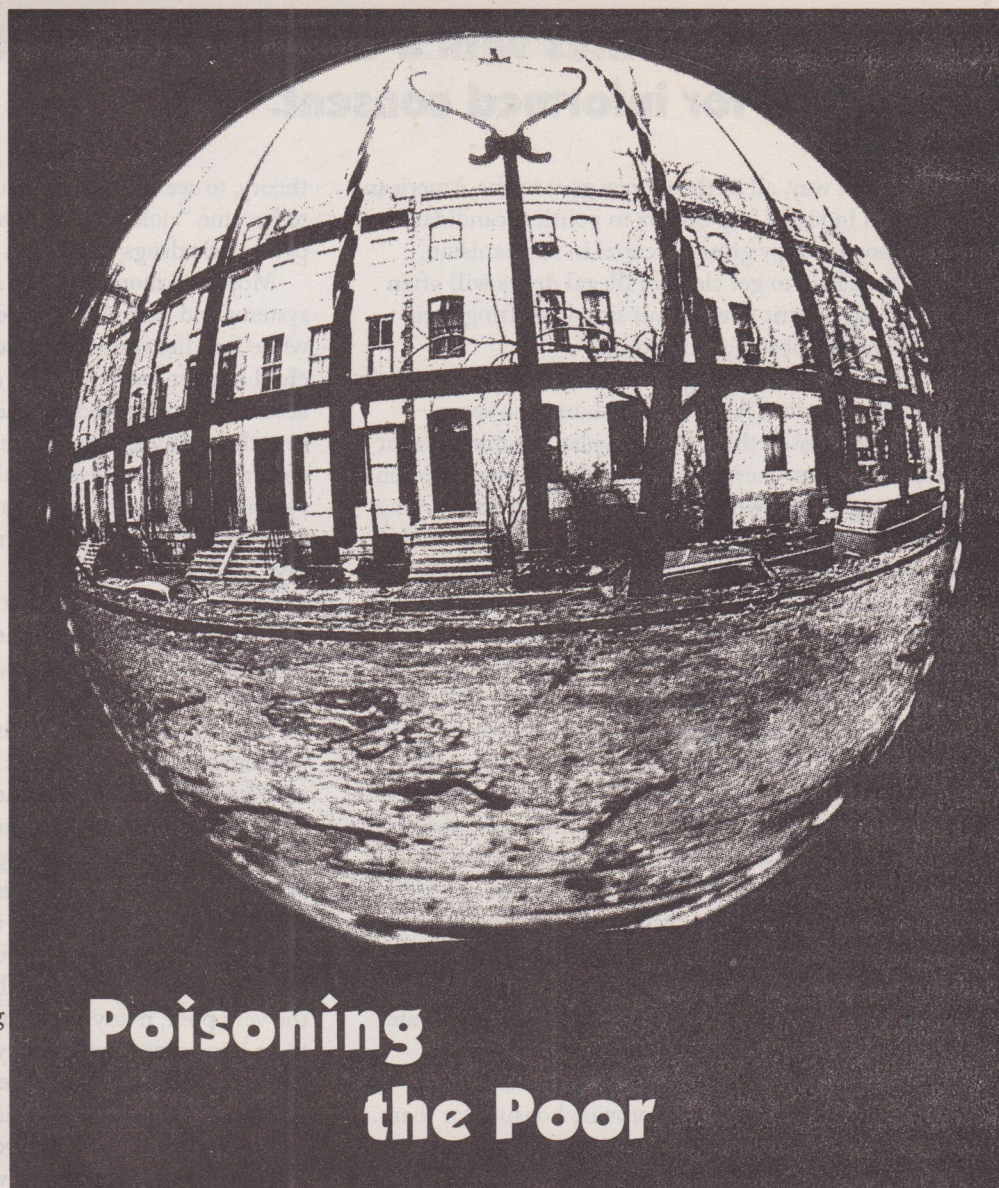
**A**s a survivor of more than a decade of psychiatric abuse, I oppose the pseudo-scientific concept of "Mental Illness" entirely. Unlike physical illnesses that are biologically based and sometimes have chemical cures, Mental Illness is a social construct used to justify abuse for the purpose of social control.

Problems commonly mislabeled as Mental Illness include anything from an unfulfilling lifestyle, to food allergies like celiac, to the stifling roles of school, work, and the binary gender system, endocrine problems such as hypothyroidism, loneliness, vitamin deficiencies, current or past experiences of violence and abuse, social oppression, recent drug use, or the types of stress and exhaustion that effects refugees, the homeless, and desperately poor people worldwide. Ironically, increasing numbers of people are suffering emotional problems due to the abusive treatments provided by the psychiatric industry itself, often while children.

In a caring, non-authoritarian society, people could receive help for emotional pain and real world causes would be addressed. Psychiatry chooses to ignore the social roots and, instead, suppress the person's emotional cry for help with brain damaging drugs. This is rather like giving a person with a broken leg a painkiller to shut them up, while neglecting to set their bone.

The potential negative repercussions of drugging someone with psych meds are far more complex and dangerous than this metaphor suggests since psychiatric drugs cause brain damage and their listed side effects include the symptoms of every imaginable "psychiatric disease," from hyperactivity, to depression, insomnia, paranoia, even hallucinations. How many people are then trapped in an endless cycle; being drugged in an attempt to control the distressing effects that the drugs themselves are causing?

The profit-driven medical establishment ignores the destructive effects of the pharmaceuticals they are dealing, but are happy to tell us all about the dangers of street drugs,



## Poisoning the Poor

because they are their main competition.

The reason psychiatric drugs cause harm is the same reason they often seem to work; they suppress the functioning of the brain. Granted, there are many people who feel they could not get through life without psychiatric drugs, but there are also many people who ascribe this role to heroin, crystal meth, or copious amounts of alcohol. I have no desire to prevent someone from drugging themselves if this is what they choose to do, but it can hardly be recommended as a healthy coping strategy.

Many people simply don't know that psych drugs are addictive substances and have withdrawals, just like street drugs. Doctors rarely inform their patients that the drugs they prescribe will cause the person to get strung out on them.

The government promotes drugs because addicted people—no matter what they are addicted to—are easier to control. Society simply prefers for its addicts to be strung out on pharmaceuticals because they are easier to



# Psychiatry operates with a blatant and publicly approved disregard for informed consent.

regulate, and that way, all of the money goes to the American pharmaceutical industry (top donors to political candidates) instead of to some poppy growing cartel in Afghanistan. People who seek help to get clean of illegal drugs will often be prescribed psychiatric drugs, thus simply shifting their addiction from one substance to another.

Many urban social service agencies recruit homeless people for experimental studies. As a formerly homeless young person, I have witnessed this predation play out first hand at youth drop-in centers where psychiatric drugs are pushed on exhausted young people who are simply overwhelmed trying to cope with the stress of survival on the streets, haunted by the painful circumstances they so often ran away from (which increasingly includes psychiatric abuse).

Tests are currently being conducted in Philadelphia on homeless people with a brain control implant. Once placed under the skin, it cannot be removed, and delivers high doses of neuroleptics continuously for up to a year. The stereotypical twitchy behavior of a seemingly "crazy" person, often older and homeless, is, in fact, not a symptom of a psychiatric disorder, but simply evidence of the harm inflicted upon them at some point in their life by psychiatrists. More than 60 per cent of people who have been drugged with neuroleptics (commonly referred to as anti-psychotics) will develop Tardive Dyskinesia, a permanent condition of often severe, painful, and disabling spasms and tics.

Most recent proposals by local governments to eliminate homelessness are based on the assumption that homeless people are mentally ill and rely on forced incarceration in psychiatric institutions as a way to provide housing for them. In many locations, submitting to psychiatric drugging is already a prerequisite for the homeless to receive basic services such as showers, meals, and shelter.

Public housing residents are frequently forced to take drugs, and if they refuse may be denied custody of their children and forced onto the streets. Psychiatrists and social workers call the increasingly popular practice of forcing entry into a victim's home to drug them against their will "a community treatment order."

Often, children attempting to report child abuse, or adults (usually women) trying to flee an abusive relationship will be forcibly drugged or institutionalized. Psychiatrists rarely bother to investigate a woman's report of domestic violence or a child's report of molestation; instead, psychiatry sides with their abusive family to silence the victim and allow the abuse to continue. Abusive families and the inherently abusive psychiatric industry make a powerful alliance that is hard for a frightened survivor to escape.

Frequently, children in foster care are used in experimental drug studies. A study is being conducted in Philadelphia and New York, funded by proponents of the racist Bell Curve

theory, to see if "high risk inner city youth" are less likely to become "violent young adults" if they are dosed with psychiatric drugs starting in childhood.

More and more children are labeled mentally ill by school systems and barred from attending school undrugged, while families (primarily low income) are charged with child neglect for refusing to drug their children. Parents are actually losing custody of their children for the refusal to give them drugs. Parents are actually losing custody of their children for the refusal to submit to drugging themselves. The psychiatric industry, with its blatant disregard for consent, is actively tearing apart the families of the people who dare to say, "No."

Unlike people labeled with a lung or liver ailment, those diagnosed with a "mental disorder" are presumed incompetent to make their own decisions, and the psychiatric industry is allowed to decide for them.

Supposedly, it is unconstitutional to hold someone in preventative detention. That is to imprison someone charged with no crime, simply because you think they might do something later. However, anywhere in the country, if someone thinks that you might be, "a danger to yourself or others," regardless of whether or not you have actually done anything illegal, you can be imprisoned in a psychiatric facility. And, over the past few years things have taken a turn for the worse. Now, primarily as a tool to illegally incarcerate the very poor, many states are passing laws allowing people to be imprisoned even if they are not considered to be "a danger to themselves or others." All that is required is the recommendation of a psychiatrist.

Once captive inside a psychiatric institution, a prisoner is likely to be heavily dosed with brain damaging drugs, typically potent cocktails of neuroleptics, which act as a chemical straightjacket, rendering thought, speech, and even movement extremely difficult.

How many people have made false confessions or signed papers agreeing to electroshock or a lobotomy while so heavily drugged that they did not realize what they were doing? The tactic is the same as a predator who slips his victims a date rape drug. Psychiatry operates with a blatant and publicly approved disregard for informed consent.

As a survivor of psychiatric abuse, and a formerly homeless youth, the social ramifications of programs that target the poor and economically undesirable for control with brain damaging drugs are obvious to me. Unfortunately, however, most liberals and progressives (and apparently also some anarchists) support these projects under the umbrella title of "community mental health."

—This article is based on the ideas contained in the 'zine *Against Psychiatry*. Available from the author. Contact [againstoppsychiatry@yahoo.com](mailto:againstoppsychiatry@yahoo.com) or visit <http://www.pigeonpress.org/againstoppsychiatry.html>



*Only a Beginning: An Anarchist Anthology.* Edited by Allan Antliff. Arsenal Pulp Press. 2004. 352 pages. \$25. Available from The Barn.

Left liberals in the United States laud Canada as a sort of parallel universe: a North American welfare state paradise where everyone has health care; foreign policy is about international peacekeeping; and a national propensity for politeness is translated into public discourse as civility. It's a mythic place where anger doesn't exist (except perhaps on the hockey ice), and anarchism is as genteel as a George Woodcock poem.

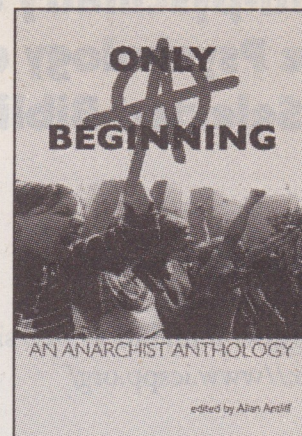
Anyone—in the US or elsewhere—harboring such illusions will find Allan Antliff's extensive compilation on the Canadian anarchist milieu since 1976 an illuminating read. The book—which grew out of a lecture series that Antliff was involved in at the Toronto Anarchist Free School—features reprints from a sprawling array of journals, zines, flyers, posters, artwork, and web sites mixed lovingly with assorted ephemera and accounts of anarchist gatherings, bookstores, and infoshops, book fairs, autonomous spaces, reading groups, squats, protests, traveling musical caravans, and communities of resistance. In short, it documents not only the politics—but the political culture—of Canadian anarchism, though its main emphasis is decidedly Anglophone.

This book is an invaluable historical resource in understanding the myriad currents of Canadian anarchism. Antliff's anthology invokes the collective past of anarchism in Canada by providing a discerning sampler of archival documents. This is a living history!

The power of the coffee-table sized *Only A Beginning* in documenting a dynamic period of resurgence for Canadian anarchism resides in the vibrancy of its 400 page collage of primary source material encompassing writing, art, and activism. Antliff has chosen entries with a keen eye for relevance and then deftly mixed these with informative analysis, which is retrospectively provided in essay form by some of the key players involved in Canadian anarchism.

Of course, any publishing project of this magnitude is inevitably incomplete. However, such omissions are not crucial to the overall success of the book. As I see it, the greatest compliment to *Only A Beginning* would be to take the title literally, as an inspiration for the promulgation of a wide variety

## Reviews



of similar archival projects throughout the world—actively creating our own movement histories page by page.

—Ron Sakolsky

*Toxic Psychiatry.* Peter R. Breggin. St Martins Press. 1991. 464 pages. \$18.

"The only known biochemical imbalances in the brains of nearly all psychiatric patients are those caused by the treatments." —Peter Breggin, *Talking Back to Prozac*

This book is as important and radical as R.D. Laing's "The Politics Of Experience" or Thomas Szasz's "The Myth of Mental Illness." Breggin has been a long time campaigner for reform of the mental health system and in the early seventies he led a successful movement to end the horrific practice of lobotomy in the US.

In this book he takes aim at the Hydra of the Psychiatric/Pharmaceutical complex and systematically disassembles the underlying rationale of BioPsychiatry. His essential thesis is that there is not now nor has there ever been a shred of credible scientific evidence for the theory that the personal experiences named as mental illness can be linked to specific neurochemical states or that genetics plays any role in these experiences. Instead, mental illness is not a disease, there are no such things as "bad chemicals in the brain" and "treatable neurochemical imbalances," and diagnoses such as schizophrenia, compulsive behavior, anxiety, substance abuse, depression, and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) are not based on any identifiable biological problem. (Breggin provides copious references supporting the striking points he makes. For example, in relation to ADHD he notes that in 1998 at the National Institutes of Health Consensus on ADHD, the following statement was issued: "We do not have an independent, valid test for ADHD, and there is no data to indicate that ADHD is due to a brain malfunction.")

But the Government, an especially toxic head of the Hydra, backs this pseudo-scientific ideology. Thus a psychiatrist, with police backing, can declare a diagnosis for you, then drug you and even imprison you against your will. Whether your concern is personal — your brother's on Ritalin—or just that the ideology of psychiatry informed and made possible the Holocaust, read *Toxic Psychiatry*, weep—and act.

—Mirror



# **Anti-psychiatry & the Psychology of Freedom— A Selected Bibliography**

Compiled by Mirror

Breggin's foundation web site:  
<http://www.icspp.org/>

## **Books that are broadly influential on the anti-psychiatry movement:**

- Laing, R.D. & Esterson, A. (1964) *Sanity, Madness, and the Family: Families of Schizophrenics*. Penguin Books. ISBN 0140211578
- Laing, R.D. (1967) *The Politics of Experience and the Bird of Paradise*. Penguin Books. ISBN 0140134867
- Szasz, Thomas. *Pain and Pleasure: A Study of Bodily Feelings* (New York: Basic Books, 1957); 2nd ed. (New York: Basic Books, 1975); with a new Preface (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1988).
- Szasz, Thomas. *The Myth of Mental Illness: Foundations of a Theory of Personal Conduct* (New York: Hoeber-Harper, 1961); rev. ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1974).
- Szasz, Thomas. *The Manufacture of Madness: A Comparative Study of the*
- Szasz, Thomas. *Inquisition and the Mental Health Movement* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970); with a new Preface (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997).

## **Books about the link between nazi germany and psychiatry:**

- Roder, Thomas. *Psychiatrists—The men behind Hitler: The architects of horror*. 2005.
- Alexander, Leo. "Public Mental Health Practices in Germany: Sterilization and Execution of Patients Suffering from Nervous or Mental Disease" from National Archives, Combined Intelligence Objective Subcommittee, G2 Division, SHAEF (Rear) APO 413. (1949)
- Aly, Gotz et. al., *Cleansing the Fatherland: Nazi Medicine and Racial Hygiene* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994)
- Burleigh, Michael, and Wipperman, Wolfgang. *The Racial State: Germany 1933-1945* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991)

## **A eugenics article that gave me nightmares:**

- Caldwell, John Harvey. "Babies by Scientific Selection" *The Scientific American* 124 (March 1934)

**There is a great deal of pain in life and perhaps the only pain that can be avoided is the pain that comes from trying to avoid pain.**

**Whether life is worth living depends on whether there is love in life.**

**We are effectively destroying ourselves by violence masquerading as love.**

**We live in a moment of history where change is so speeded up that we begin to see the present only when it is already disappearing.**

**We are bemused and crazed creatures, strangers to our true selves, to one another, and to the spiritual and material world—mad, even, from an ideal standpoint we can glimpse but not adopt.**

**The range of what we think and do is limited by what we fail to notice. And because we fail to notice that we fail to notice, there is little we can do to change; until we notice how failing to notice shapes our thoughts and deeds.**

**Madness need not be all breakdown. It may also be break-through. It is potential liberation and renewal as well as enslavement and existential death.**

**—RD Laing**



# THE PSYCHOLOGY OF EMPIRE

by William Kötke

Fear is the fundamental of this cultural form. The assertion is that the basic spiritual shift in consciousness was from a reality-view that saw the entire cosmos as alive and fecund to a reality-view that saw the earth as meaningless matter to be used to battle the scarcity of the world. On the one hand, the human is at home on the earth sharing space with other cooperating neighbor species in a reality of mystery and power. On the other hand, one lives in a world of accumulation where fear of scarcity and survival is prevalent.

On a more profound level, one has spiritually severed oneself from a reality of participation in a living, abundant world and created a reality of scarcity and violence in which one is a competitive isolate in a meaningless world.

When a tree sprouts in the forest it begins to assemble life. The tree extends its roots and no doubt makes contact with the mycelium of a mushroom, extending its energy flow and living relationship. It raises leaves to the sun and connects with that living energy system. It connects with water in the air and soil; it connects with the diverse soil community. The tree unifies energies in its living systems.

The life of the earth functions in its balanced way because each being lives according to its particular nature.

The decentralized power of all life resides in each being. In contrast, the pattern of empire culture is to centralize power over life and consequently the natural patterns disintegrate.

A golf course, for example, appears very neat and orderly. With its edged borders, well-watered grass, and trees, it represents the epitome of orderliness to the mind conditioned by the culture of civilization. In the reality of earth life, created and conditioned by cosmic forces, it is a gross disorder. Where once stood a life potentiating, balanced and perpetual, dynamic, climax ecosystem with its diverse circulating energies and manifold variety of beings, there are now a few varieties of designer plants kept alive by chemicals and artificial water supplies. A staff of maintenance people are kept busy battling the integrated life of the earth that attempts to rescue this wound by sending in the plants, animals, and other life forms that are naturally adapted to live in the area.

Human life in the culture of civilization is severed from its source in a similar way. It is alienated from its source. This profoundly affects the psychology of the humans involved. On the one hand, we humans as forager/hunters stand on the earth. When we eat from the earth, we have a certain dignity and security. Each one of the tribe has the culturally given knowledge of how to walk out on the earth and find food and shelter. It is a direct and intimate relationship.

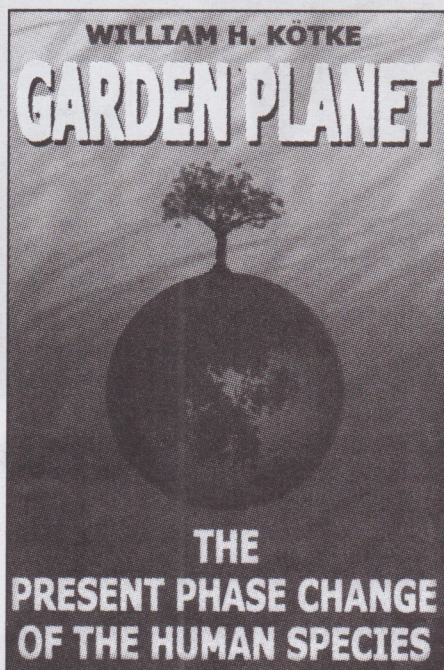
In the culture of empire, people are dependent on other people for their food and shelter. They do not get their sustenance from their intimate relationship with the earth but from their manipulation of other humans in some manner. They exist in a vast productive mechanism that sucks materials from the earth to build an artificial reality such as a shopping mall where humans manipulate each other in order to achieve the needs of their existence.

The integrated nature of the organic form of the whole world and the adaptation of each form within is demonstrated by their place in the balanced metabolism of the whole. There is an organism within organic life that does not practice this balance within the metabolism. It practices a linear growth plan. This organism is the cancer cell within biological life

and it does accurately reflect an analogy with the culture of civilization.

The cancer cell breaks the cooperative and sharing relationship with its fellow cells and becomes "God" as it were. "I am not satisfied with what has been given with this body, I shall create a body of my own design." Instead of remaining integrated and adapted to the body it is part of, the cancer cells create a body of their own design and use the host's body as its energy feed. This unlimited growth system of the cancerous tumor body built by the cells begins to colonized the body, establishing new cancer tumor bodies, all functioning in a parasitic metabolism until the host body dies.

This is an excerpt from *GARDEN PLANET: The Present Phase Change of The Human Species*. By William H. Kötke. AuthorHouse. 2005. 146 pages. \$11. Available from the Barn.





# Passion Fruit:

## A History of (Con)Sensuous Games

by Mark Berry

The sign read: "Men can wear one article of clothing, and women can wear two articles of clothing." This was the second annual naked smoothie party that boasted not just fruity blender drinks and creative nudity, but also a steamy hot tub, a banana shaped pool, dancing, body painting, massage, and more.

How did we get here? Did it evolve from a kissing game of twenty people that involved discussions of sexuality, direct action, and anarchy? Did we gain some revolutionary insights while exploring sensual intimacy in between laughter, opinions, and chocolate sauce? Were we breaking down barriers to intimacy while drafting erotic letters and colorful collage-filled cards? What were we risking? Would anyone be disrespected?

Our thinking has evolved through experience in creating emotionally safe consensuous games and expressions of love. A consensuous game is a voluntary experience set up to create a playful new situation intended to encourage intimate expressions and explorations. Games break down ideological, physical, and emotional barriers to love. In referring to surrealism as a game, Philippe Audouin writes, "The prizes in the eyes of those who played and lived it can be calculated in promises of freedom, love, revolution and in anything else that intransigent desire can aspire to." Indeed, freedom, love, revolution, and desire are the prizes of consensuous games for us!

For me, these games are also a way to begin to dialogue about polyamory and other desires without jumping headlong into the world of open relationships. I also wanted to expand friendships to include more intimacy and romance.

For some, they left the games feeling warmer toward fellow gameplayers. Touch for many can bring a sense of ease to the body and a sense of love for the people involved. Liberating touch can be a foundation to creating intimate

connections. More than once, our Passion Fruit collective meetings ended with loving warmth in the hottub and even resulted in a polyamorous relationship among some collective members. Consensuous games catalyzed many experimental relationships and evolving conceptions of love and desire.



**A consensuous game encourages intimate expressions and explorations. Games break down ideological, physical, and emotional barriers to love.**

In romantic friendship relationships, two people may be physically intimate in similar intensity as in a partner relationship, so finding ways to proceed with caution and communication are vital, and it's easy to make mistakes. Predators and patriarchal interpretations of freeing love can creep into these game experiences as well. You may find that there are people in a game that you don't want to be intimate with, so finding a way to honestly express that is important.

Here are some of the questions we have tried to answer, and we encourage you to answer before you start: How do friends touch each other and show affection in a safe and respectful way? What do I risk in sharing love with partners, friends, and acquaintances? How do we integrate honesty, gentleness, acceptance, and inclusion into the continuum of intimacy? Why do we want to explore intimacy and radical touch? How do we create games and experiences that have activities that are optional and also allow people to

slowly sink into playing?

Thanks to the participation of my friend Applecore, slut liberation became prominent in the history of our games with the addition of the Erotic Liberation Letters, where participants were encouraged to free their spontaneous erotic energies by expressing their feelings in creative collages and intimate letters with "slut buddies." She comments on these games, "Erotic games and play not only keep us alive and remembering what we know but remind us of what freedom tastes like as they give us safe venues for exploring our desires. These games are where we feed our ravenous imaginations, discover new inspiration and surprise, undermine despair,



## All these experiences developed simultaneously with many activists' interests in polyamory and designing their own relationships. Games, radical touch, intimacy, and polyamory all exist within the same continuum.

subvert reality, romp unbounded and uninhibited, and experience solidarity and joy." Applecore wants to explore intimacy and radical touch, the whole range of touch between people, of which kissing and sex are only one small part. Radical touch includes massage, body painting, holding hands, hugging, and even attentive conversation and verbal sharing. In her games, Applecore writes love letters to everything from the praying mantis to laughter.

All these experiences developed simultaneously with many activists' interests in polyamory and designing their own relationships. Games, radical touch and intimacy, and polyamory all exist within the same continuum.

These explorations brought us closer together while fighting and building. We battled Monsanto's biotech, the World Agriculture Forum, police brutality, the wars in Iraq/Afghanistan, lead mines, the clearcutting of Missouri forests, globalization. We renovated our community center/infoshop and coop houses, baking bread and cookies at the bakery, doing Food Not Bombs, growing food, repairing bikes for kids, working for animal rights, attending the Great Plains Anarchist Network conferences, publishing zines and Confluence, organizing Biodevastation, planning for diverse neighborhoods and affordable housing, and maintaining the St. Louis IMC.

During the difficulties and joys of games, we've discovered that sometimes game obsolescence sets in. Games can become less exciting after played several times. Sometimes, game players feel inspired to spontaneously recombine the sensuous game experiences to make them new and

challenging yet safe and respectful.

With years of "games praxis," I found my true calling in Anarchist Spin the Bottle—a hyper-developed spin the bottle for a multicultural and anti-authoritarian audience. There are questions for all genders and sexualities to challenge

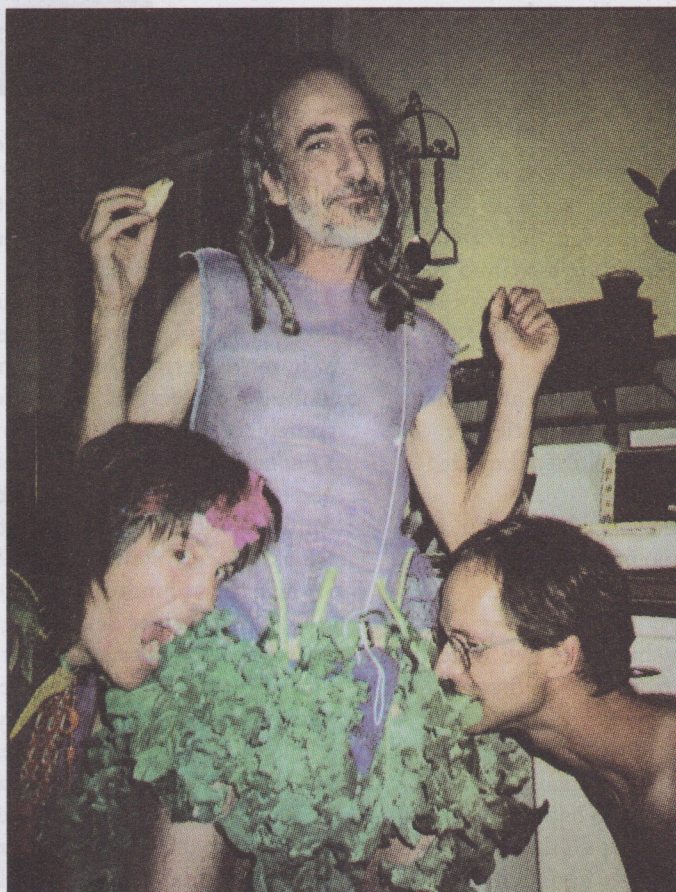
and celebrate all genders and sexualities. There are questions that break down barriers and ideological pre-conceptions of love, intimacy, and friendship. Players explore consensual touch or chocolate sauce.

During one game session, we discovered a secret fetish for licking (homegrown) raspberry and blueberry compote off each other's legs and arms. From anarchist history questions, we role play with the favorite radicals we want to fuck. Or, it can involve massaging a friend's neck or slutty group kiss-alls.

It ranges from tactical questions on multicultural organizing and the black bloc to the latest on people of color anarchists and green anarchy. I hope it makes a contribution to anarchist critiques and educating new anarchists and radicals while spreading more smooches all around.

This could be my consensual games magnum opus! Keep yer lip balm ready! We declare the new era of polysmoochery,

a specialization of polyamory! Let's not stop there: Calling all bootgrabbing, smooching, touching, licking, loving, communicating sluts: to the insurrectional barricades with your love of radical intimacy! Cobblestones in one hand and passion fruit in the other!



**This is an excerpted & edited version of a longer piece, the lead article in the amazing 'zine *Passion Fruit: Anti-Authoritarian (Con)Sensuous Games*. \$4 Available from the Barn or Contact [mberry@riseup.net](mailto:mberry@riseup.net) or c/o Confluence PO Box 63232, St. Louis. MO 63163**



Being a person deeply committed to nonviolence, to spiritual anarchy, and to actively not going along with the status quo in any way, I have to admit I started reviewing this book with the intention of trashing it. Initially, my reaction was, "Oh, this is ridiculous; this is absurd; this is twisted." But the more I read it, and the more I talked with people about it, the more I came to agree with Peter Gelderloos. To a point.

Privileged white people "tsk-tsking" the reactions of those in situations unimaginable to upper class do-gooders—while safely ensconced in a system itself protected by violence—is not radical. While these people possess good intentions, there is always something vaguely repulsive about their reliance on voting, petitions, and demonstrations. Now I have a clear understanding of why.

The principle they are committed to, in reality, is pseudo-nonviolence. That's not good enough. It is, in fact, a lie. They are lying to themselves, and this is what protects the State. They want to do good, to affect change, but are too timid and too mediocre to examine their own belief system or make any real or profound changes in their individual lives. And if you can't change your self, you can't change the world.

Gelderloos produces his compelling argument for violent uprising and premeditated destruction. These activities are very persuasive and do create radical power shifts. They are important—but only in the proper context.

There are people practicing real nonviolence. They are forming communities, alternative economies and living out their nonviolent world-views. This is vitally important... maybe it's the most important.

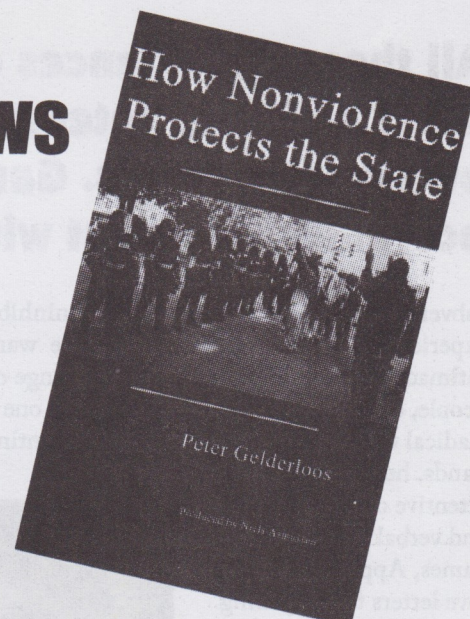
Without models of how people may be able to live, instead, all anybody will ever hope to achieve from their militant or semi-militant tactics is a new kind of oppression, a better oppression. This is the place where oppression becomes internalized, where people begin oppressing themselves. And once they do that, they become better able to become, at some later date, oppressors themselves. It happens all the time, and it is not sustainable. How many times do we have to repeat ourselves?

Even though some of what Gelderloos says is true enough, it carries within it a dangerous lie. Anarchy cannot come about via one way only. It cannot buy into militarism. It can allow it, understand it, and forgive it, but it cannot buy into it—at least not without scrupulous self-examination. It needs many voices, from many different directions, coming together to get along. Dichotomizing does not work.

Those of us who espouse nonviolence should read this book. Not to get converted—but to look at our own motives and figure out a way to make them truly congruent with what we say we believe. It's not an easy or quick process, but it is crucial.

—Anne R. Key

## Reviews



*Hymns for Brueghel: Brambles of Berries, Rants, and Poetic Orgies* by (un)leash. Published by Ink and Scribe in coordination with Cafe Press, 2005. Contact: Primal Revival Press at [wyrdwizard@hotmail.com](mailto:wyrdwizard@hotmail.com)  
Available from the Barn for \$20

"The Full Moon strips civilization from the landscape, and it becomes fully 1,000 years ancient. The sun and moon know how to make eternal. But once an area is colonized, it stays colonized for so very long. How long before these delusions evaporate for good? Will I live to see it? Will I live my whole life under the occupation? [...] Yet I would Los Angeles become a Homeland again, for beneath my feet, by sunset or moonlight, crickets chirp by the tule villages where campfires are cooking acorn stew." —from *Hymns for Brueghel*

Where the ground squirrels used to play are now hideous houses. Witchcraft as defiant pagan anarchy. We live on the sharp edge of the moment. Beauty, or wages?

These are just a few of the pieces in *Hymns for Brueghel*, in which the author ranges widely over love, Germanic mythology, his own personal dilemmas and joys, and much more. Amidst "Jimson-weed Essays from the Dark Night" and "Maenadic Letters", he also comments on the alchemy of lips, transformality, and the abuse of Iraqi prisoners. (un)leash is long into the process of loving honestly and contemplating the complexities involved. While living in a city, he gathers wild edibles. Rejecting the oppressive status quo, he reaches for the magic of place, poetry, human connection and the wonder of the senses, and his own heart-felt curiosity and desires.

*Hymns for Brueghel* is yet another title from micro-publisher Primal Revival Press. Other titles from this press are *Live Your Madness: How to Become Sane by Going Crazy* and *Affirming Your Weirdness*, and *Wyrd Megan Thew*, a commentary on Germanic and Norse mythology.

The author is a bit of Whitman, Ginsberg, Isiah, Rimbaud, and Blake, but he is mostly, uniquely (un)leash. His rants and essays moved me closer to my own voice and dreams.

—Jim Yarbrough



# Reviews

*EcoVillage at Ithaca: Pioneering a Sustainable Culture.* Liz Walker. 256 pages. New Society Publishers. 2005.

Those who are best comprehending The Problem are making alliances with those who are best comprehending The Solution. Liz Walker's timely book is a chronicle, manual, and inspiration for that movement. The Problem being addressed is that the praxis of our civilization is unsustainable. The Solution is to move in the direction of living more locally and more lightly.

A key aspect of the movement for a new society will be fostering the emergence of intentional communities committed to taking an integrated approach to addressing the problems of ecological degradation and social dysfunction.

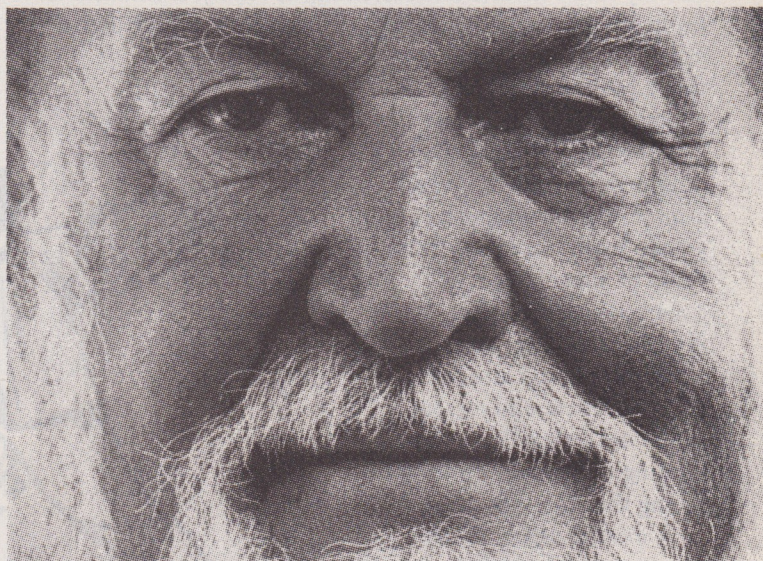
People need to make change together, ideally at a scale where they feel empowered and consequential. We need to have the pleasure of company and co-participation, the motivation of peer appraisal (and praise!), the sense that we are engaged in significant common enterprise and shared goal-achievement. It is in community, through joint action, that we have the best chance to improve our quality of life while making significant strides in the direction of sustainability.

Walker and Joan Bokaer founded the EcoVillage at Ithaca project (EVI) in 1991 and have been instrumental in guiding it toward realization of its initial vision: A multi-neighborhood cohousing community modeling innovative approaches to ecological and social sustainability. Setting on 175-acres overlooking Ithaca, N.Y., it features an organic farm, education center, and natural areas (over 80% of the land is preserved or has been restored as green space). The residential component of EVI is currently two (eventually to be three or four) clustered cohousing neighborhoods surrounding a shared commons. Psychological/characterological health is dependent upon having a place and a status within a comprehensible social world. Disorientation results from trying to negotiate within domains that effectively lack boundaries and limits; from trying to succeed confronting standards associated with steeply pyramidal status hierarchies.

We're given the impression that we are fortunate to be presented with near-limitless sources of stimulation, choice, and opportunity. But psychologists are discovering that such an operational milieu is confusing, distracting and anxiety-provoking. In our globalized mass-production/mass-consumption/mass-communication reality, human scale long ago ceased to be a value. All has gone "hyper" too much, too fast, too far, too big; too synthetic and overly complex. Ours is now, indeed, a civilization of disorientation and discontent.

The lesson to be learned is that social pathology invariably results when a society becomes unmoored from a basic grounding in natural sensibilities of limits and balances. Avoiding a collision course with madness will require more than technological panaceas, corporate constraints, or governmental regime change. We need to restore the human scale in all aspects of life. We need to reconstitute real community. We need to find our way Home. Cohousing and ecovillage communities will serve as models (and base camps!) for the broad global movement working to Green our civilization and set it on a path toward sustainability.

—Steve Welzer



## Folk is Punk

*Starlight on the Rails: Songbook*, U. Utah Phillips, 4 CDs, AK Press, 2005, \$39

*Memory Against Forgetting*, Casey Neill, CD, AK Press, 2005, \$15 Available from <http://akpress.org>

A narchist ideals have been expressed in a myriad of musical genres from rock to funk to jazz to world to trance. But the forms thoroughly connected to agit-prop are the most exemplary to me as they are extreme: folk, rap, and punk. This is not to say there's never any revolutionary aspect to a saxophone riff or violin solo—or even an intoxicating sample tweaked to perfection on a laptop.

continued on page 37



**FE Note: A spinoff from our letters' section, "Both Sides Now" presents two distinct views on a controversial topic, side by side. On the left, FE reader Seaweed elaborates points first raised in his "Land And Liberty" (FE #367, p. 22-23). His views might be shared by many *Fifth Estate* readers and writers, but by no means all, as clearly evidenced by EB Maple's response (FE #370, p. 52). Hence, on the right, we present Maples's elaboration of an "opposing" view.**

**C**an we claim autonomous space without getting bruised? Should we base the realization of our dreams and desires on a patient wait for objective conditions to create openings in the dominant reality? I don't think so, unless anarchist space only refers to poetry readings.

I think we all agree that we — alone or in groups — should actively create fissures and breaks in the reality of domination using our will and imagination, our creative and destructive capacities. To me that means that a healthy community or a momentum of resistance would have a martial aspect.

Martial skills are not just guns. Guns are weapons—among many available—that could be a component of a martial approach. But, martial knowledge and experience would also tell us when to retreat and regroup, so I'm not only talking about fighting or weapons or always taking the offensive.

A martial aspect to our resistance might include, for some at least, acquiring a weapon, but it would also suggest learning martial arts, studying military history, acquiring survival skills, playing games which develop tactical and strategic thinking, and generally, making room for martial approaches within the anti-authoritarian struggle.

I'm not suggesting re-exploring a tired leftist "armed struggle" approach—but encouraging something completely different. We *can* learn from the past attempts of AIM, the Black Panthers,

etc., but only as part of a larger study of martial traditions and attempts—not as admirable models.

There is no question that the state has overwhelming military might. For any group to advocate for an attempt to militarily overthrow the state at this point would be plainly stupid. None of my friends and allies want to sacrifice their lives. There is no naivete as to the military might of the state. However, I believe that some knowledge of martial skills

and an acceptance of martial approaches generally could be helpful, even critical, when confronting authority. I'm talking about winning battles not about winning a war. I'm talking about training and demystification of weaponry and martial skills.

Not everyone has to participate in this aspect. I recognize that a diversity of means is needed for us to succeed. But the debate, for me at least, isn't between "armed struggle" and "popular revolts" or between "violence" and "non-violence", it's between making room for a martial component, in all the diversity that implies, and not making room for such a component in our struggle.

This isn't about machismo or police plants. Martial study needn't become the central focus of the anti-authoritarian milieu. But I am confident that creating space for these skills to be explored is a critical aspect of resistance. —Seaweed



**Martial skills are not just guns. Guns are weapons, among many that are available, that could be a component of a martial approach. Knowledge of martial skills and an acceptance of martial approaches generally could be helpful, even critical, when confronting authority.**



# BOTH SIDES NOW



**W**hile I've gained a tremendous amount of personal reward from studying martial disciplines for over 30 years, I can't think of much I've learned that is useful to a revolutionary movement. Nor from time spent at the rifle range.

I've seen a lot of advocates of martial arts and weapon training, armed struggle, guerrilla warfare, and the like during my lifetime; most of them have a short-shelf life in our movements. They quickly pass through after denouncing people as not being ready for revolution, leaving others to clean up the mess they often create. Some are cops, some are plants, most are just angry men. (I don't think Seaweed fits any of these categories. From what I know of Seaweed, he has a solid and admirable history within the anti-authoritarian movement.)

Sometimes, like in the case of the Black Panthers, the outcome from a martial approach is deaths and long jail sentences. Several BPPers are still in prison after 30 years, and the death toll at the hands of murderous cops is near 40. I'm not sure that the Black Panthers have much to teach us when it comes to martial matters other than in the negative.

We're often told that the Panthers were much more than guns. Indeed, they had admirable community programs and gave a sense of pride to many black people who viewed them as willing to heroically stand up to racist cops and politicians. The same is true with MOVE and the American Indian Movement. But for all their bravery, nothing approaching

a mass movement coalesced around these organizations; instead, their armed resistance was a spectacle eagerly consumed, but from a distance, by their potential constituencies. Most people hesitate to link up with an organization which calls for "revolutionary suicide."

Those groups read Sun Tzu, Klauswitz, Tukhachevsky, Geronimo, Mao, Giap, Debray, Guevara, Marighella, but whatever they surmised from these strategists, as well as time spent in rifle practice, it never did them a bit of good when confronted with the overwhelming military might of the state.

A different approach comes from Tai Chi Chuan practice, which emphasizes harmony and balance and when done together with others, creates an amazing sense of energy. That spirit is what many Tai Chi instructors see as its transformative quality for a troubled world. Its philosophy, similar to anarchism, is based on the *Tao Te Ching* by Lao-Tze which I would recommend over any of the authors I mention above.

In the working parts of Detroit and its inner suburbs, great numbers of our neighbors have weapons in their homes as I do. Many of the men are army veterans, some of combat. If there was a popular uprising, or the need for community defense arose, armed units could be erected, complete with military strategy. Reading Sun Tzu may have some marginal worth—but me, I'm going to the poetry reading.

—EB Maple

**FE Note:** Please let us know what you think of the "Both Sides Now" feature: give us feedback and suggest future topics.

**I've seen a lot of advocates of martial arts and weapon training, armed struggle, guerrilla warfare, and the like during my lifetime; most of them have a short-shelf life in our movements. They quickly pass through after denouncing people as not being ready for revolution, leaving others to clean up the mess they often create.**



(continued from page 2)

It was among these customers that I found, inside myself, something surprising. There's a core group that considers David's shop their home away from home. They gather in the late afternoon to sit around, drink beer, and shoot the shit. Listening to their talk, it didn't take too long for the revulsion to set in. A more sexist, racist bunch of flag-wavers I've never seen.

But then there's me.

Just being polite, for David's sake, made me realize something outrageous. I can connect with their humanity. They do have some. It's weird. I feel like I'm doing a graduate course in learning to love my enemy! Which is nothing less than the pure, unadulterated Spirit of Revolution.

Loving your enemy is the most radical, revolutionary idea humanity has ever had. And our only real hope. The real Revolution comes from within; everything else is made-up bullshit.

What if everybody practiced loving their enemies?

There would be no enemies. Imagine that.

#### Anne R. Key

*Anne is a radical homeschooler traveling the country with her son in a converted school bus. They are finding fabulous learning opportunities everywhere.*

Contact her at [anne\\_r\\_key@yahoo.com](mailto:anne_r_key@yahoo.com)

#### Are Wobblies bums? Do Wobblies want to work?

Nice issue on the IWW (see FE Fall 2005), especially the stuff on the free speech fights, sabotage, etc.

Must say, though, I was a bit surprised of the angle many of the articles tended to take: Wobblies war on work? I found that to be wrong in that the IWW—or any other labor activist—is not averse to work per se, just the oppression of workers. Though you tried to explain some rationale for this stance in more than one selection, it just seemed odd to me.

Wobblies desperately tried to organize hobos, yes, but not as hobos. These guys were traveling around homelessly because they sought work,

not because they were professional hobos. IWW campaigns in the hobo jungles were an attempt to bring some humanity to a miserable state of affairs: strengthen them by giving them a sense of union.

The ultimate goal, however, was for them to remain Wobs after they'd gotten jobs as mill workers, lumberjacks, seamen, miners, what have you, and then spread the organizing into those worksites. At a glance, one might almost think that your mag implied that the IWW was a union of "bums." Instead, it was a union of very proud people who, like most of us, work.

Beyond that, they fought for social change and a higher vision that might change the world order. But they were not principally a group that celebrated the Big Rock Candy Mountain—more like Workers of the World, Awaken.

Anyhow, I was still glad to be a part of it all.

John Pietaro

Hudson Valley, New York

**FE Note:** John wrote "A Century of Radical Song" for the Fall 2005 FE. His web site, [flamesofdiscontent.org](http://flamesofdiscontent.org), features information about his band and his music activism.

**We welcome letters that respond to articles or report on your activities. Please write us! Email correspondence is preferred. Please limit letters to 300 words. We reserve the right to edit for length, grammar, and clarity. If you are interested in a longer exchange, please let us know.**

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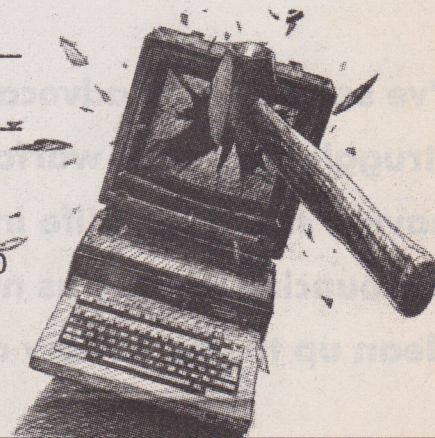
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**"SUPPORTING REVOLUTION  
EVERYWHERE SINCE 1965"**

- FBI report on the Fifth Estate





Among the anarchist youth culture, “folkie” was once a pejorative term to describe the lazy saccharine anthems found in one’s parents’ vinyl collection. But anyone who has spent time recently around anarchist travelers has noticed a shift in the predominant musical tastes of contemporary tramps. Ten years ago, punk was all these kids needed. But today, they’ve added fiddles and banjos to the mix. Even the best punk music today—created by the likes of Against Me, This Bike is A Pipe Bomb, and Defiance, Ohio—has serious folksy roots. But in the streets and on the rails, even that sound gives way to something deeper, simpler, and more familiar. They move the bow across the fiddle strings as though they were playing thrash. And the patches on their soiled Carharrrts provide the clue to this connection: Old time is the new punk.

But, of course, folk is the old punk. Before Johnny Rotten there was Phil Ochs. And back in the days of the early IWW, there was Joe Hill and Harry McClintock. In this context of folk as some of the best punk (punkin’ folk!), I celebrate two new audio releases from AK Press, the radical publisher best known for its books.

In the tradition of Wobbly troubadours, Utah Phillips brings us a new, definitive collection of his work, merging humor and a hatred of injustice; they are serious yet funny and full of hopeful rage. These four discs, with over 300 minutes of work, offer exquisite and unpretentious examples of talking Wobbly anthems and storytelling grit. Utah’s is a narrative soaked in the blood, battles, and booze of hobohebian culture, with more heart than a hundred heartthrobs hyped on radio. In an innovative move, the liner notes are recorded tracks between songs where Phillips talks up each piece, providing pithy stories, irresistible tangents, and amusing disclaimers to go with every tune.

As he riffs on war, Wobbly history, pacifism, alcoholism, poverty, and Ammon Hennacy’s description of “anarchy as an adjective,” Utah is someone the latest generation of gritty anarchist folksingers should get to know. Likewise, another singer with his own new retrospective-like release on AK Records is Casey Neill.

Once a staple of the Earth First! rant, wail, and strum scene in the days of his cassette classic *Pawprints*, Neill always distinguished himself from the bludgeon-wielding bards for whom a song is merely a list of demands with a melody. And even as his work became more polished over the years, he never heeded the call to become just another sappy balladeer. Of its many attributes, Neill’s *Memory Against Forgetting* covers enormous ground melodically. As stalwart and inspiring the political message, his music moves the listener as much more than a mere container for his lyrics.

Not unlike David Rovics and Steve Earle and Billy Bragg, Casey Neill and Utah Phillips are still producing new material and playing out, by no means content now that they have really strong “greatest hits”-type offerings available. This energy can be felt among less known but equally compelling young voices like Anna Roland, Ethan Miller, Evan Greer,

and Ryan Harvey. While the angry political folksinger can become a tedious caricature, it’s also an irrepressible icon constantly reinventing itself at a time when the topical screed is needed as much as ever. Utah Phillips and Casey Neill deserve to remain in rotation for the revolution.

—Anu Bonobo

## Some Good Bookchin?

*The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy.* by Murray Bookchin. AK Press. 2005. 491pp. \$23.

A n influential theorist with a background in anarcho-syndicalism and Marxian theory, Murray Bookchin has spent the past thirty-five years developing and promoting social ecology, one of the few anarchist schools of thought to have its own school, the Institute for Social Ecology in Vermont. The latter part of his career has been devoted to curmudgeonly crusades to “save” anarchism and ecology from what he sees as its pitfalls: mysticism, biocentrism, and something called “lifestylism.”

Originally published in 1982, *The Ecology of Freedom*, a central work of Bookchin’s career, has just been republished by AK Press with a new third introduction by the author.

Just as Marx thought that capitalism was a step on the road to communism, Bookchin seems to view history as a tragic but necessary path that could return us to an improved Eden. The central theory put forward here is that the relationships of domination that evolved in prehistoric human society set the stage for humanity’s domination of nature. If we can rid ourselves of that domination, but retain what many claim are its products – reason and technology – a kind of ecotopia could unfold.

Although they’re plausible, Bookchin’s arguments are undermined by being presented as facts. The author is emphatic about the intrinsic value of reason, and he states, “It would be better to use our rational faculties and reflect on them later than to lose them altogether to a dark heritage that may obliterate mind itself.” One wonders if it’s just a coincidence that Bookchin sees this “dark heritage” returning through interest in non-western societies.

Bookchin proposes a “new” politics based on autonomous municipalities that would make decisions in New England-style town hall meetings. Looking back in time, the author reserves his highest regard for Athenian democracy, and sees the later emergence of representative democracy as a step backwards. It’s a shame that Bookchin didn’t seriously consider the many “primitive” societies whose practice of direct democracy both predates the Greeks and has even survived the emergence of capitalism and the modern state.



In his two additional introductions, one from 1991 and one from this year, Bookchin takes such pains to distance himself from his detractors that he highlights the most conservative aspects of his work. It's a shame, because his work should be more widely read and understood, despite its flaws. —John Brinker

## Wilson's Green Alchemy & Magick Poetry

*Gothick Institutions.* by Peter Lamborn Wilson. Xexoxial Editions. Dreamtime Village. 2005. 76 pages. \$10.  
<http://www.xexoxial.org>  
Available from the Barn.

A new Peter Wilson book is already a cause for celebration, but this lush collaboration exceeds even my already high expectations. Made beautiful by the production team of Miekal And and Zon Wakest team at Dreamtime Village, our wise and playful rebel wields his waking fantasy to distill wild speculation in a dense and delirious brew of brave meditation.

Ostensibly a volume of poems, this dense glossary packs the deep gratification of his best prose. But at its best, *Gothick Institutions* is neither poetry nor prose while obviously both—because buried in these pages we find wrinkled love letters from our spiritual ancestors reincarnated as the crinkly cartography of our future utopia.

In this collection, Wilson digs in your great-grandmother's backyard with a giant shovel made of peppermint candy and a psychedelic microscope framed in gold. Looking in places that time and history have forgotten, he uncovers mystery and recovers madness—these pagan pathways pry open imaginal possibilities, hints for further reading and radical fantasy.

Of course, since Wilson is a colleague and frequent collaborator with this magazine, since Dreamtime offered a model a decade ago when we founded Pumpkin Hollow, this review revels in its own disclaimer dance, bridled with a brazen and incestuous hope for more volumes by Wilson coming from that Wisconsin enclave of autonomous art.

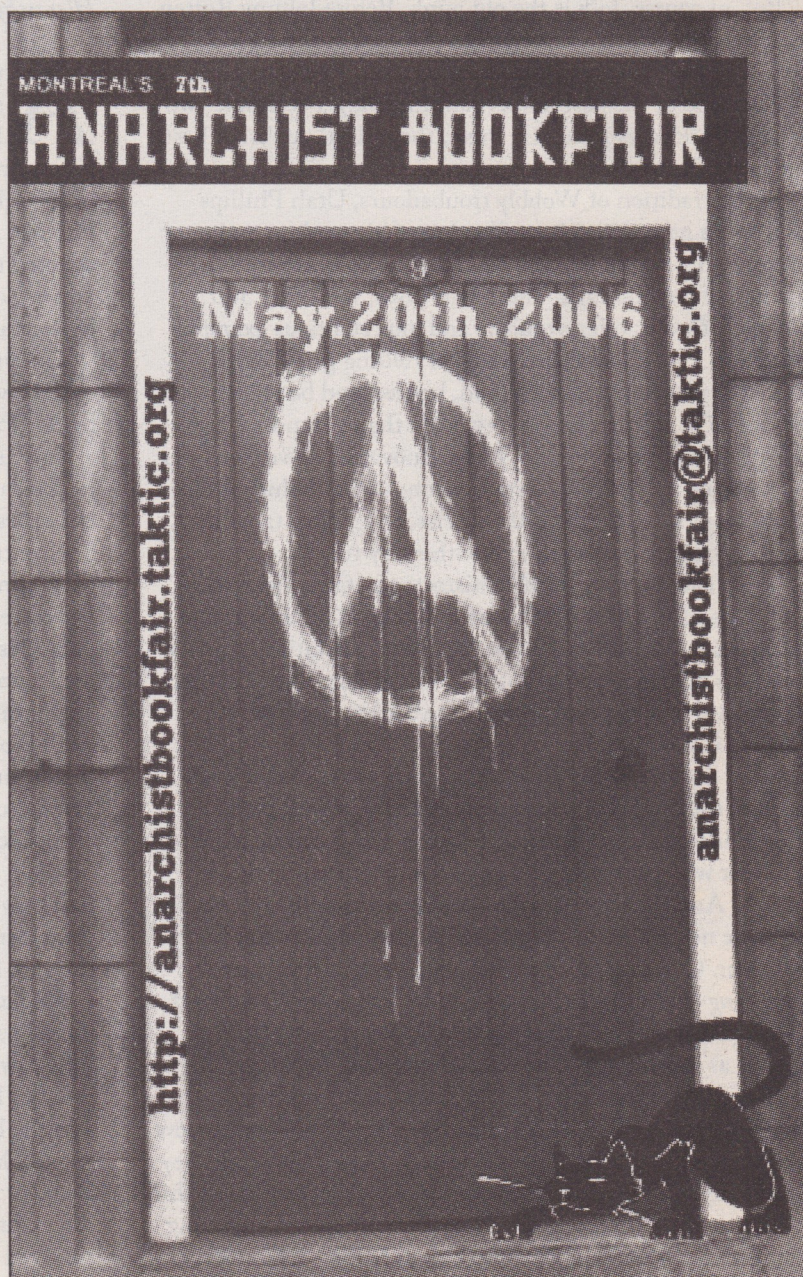
—Anu Bonobo

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With the new age personal 'zine found on blogs

and in online journals, the photocopied pamphlet as personal soapbox has become a novel antiquity. But in all its cut-and-paste glory, Jenna Free's annual *Shout Out* is the best of what this genre can and should be.

While I wait for my 2005 edition to arrive, some highlights of the 2004 edition include: the intricate "reading log," serving as a resource guide and whirlwind of capsule reviews; the "I Don't Understand" and "Good Stuff" lists, especially "I don't understand why some couples share an email account when everyone can have his or her own for free."

While the media pontificates about the late-December battle between faux-Christian-consumer piety and all-out pagan decadence, I'm thrilled that I have friends engaged in seasonal subversions. —Anu Bonobo





# BOOKS FROM THE BARN

## NEW

*Gothick Institutions* by Peter Lamborn Wilson (Xexoxial 2005) \$10 (see the review on page 38)

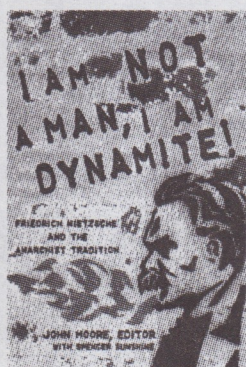
*Garden Planet* by William Kötke (AuthorHouse 2005) \$11 (see the reprint on page 33)

*Passion Fruit* (Passion Fruit 2005) \$5 (see the reprint on page 30-31)

*Hymns for Brueghel: Brambles of Berries, Rants, and Poetic Orgies* by (un)leash. (Primal Revival Press 2005) \$20 (see the review on page 32)

*Only A Beginning*, edited by Allan Antliff (Arsenal Pulp Press 2004) \$25 (see the review on page 27)

## RECENT RELEASES & BEST SELLERS



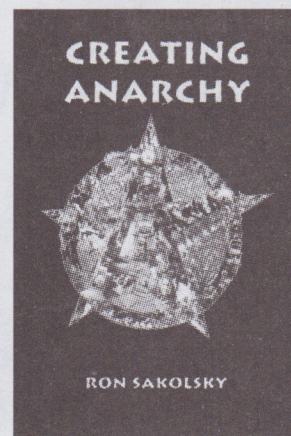
**John Moore with Spencer Sunshine. *I Am Not A Man, I Am Dynamite!* (Autonomedia 2005)**

**\$15** The conjunction of Friedrich Nietzsche and anarchism will sound like an audacious proposal to many, especially those who still associate Nietzsche with fascism, and anarchism with a simplistic notion of class struggle. However, anarchism — the project which aims at the abolition of all forms of power, control, and coercion — should be free to appropriate the work of one of the greatest iconoclasts of all time. This book examines the historical, political, and philosophical linkages between Nietzsche's transgressive thought and the transformative political vision of anarchism.

***Recipes for Disaster* (CrimethInc 2005) \$12** Just in time for your next action or affinity group meeting, the creative collaborators known as CrimethInc. have released their own version of an anarchist cookbook. With over 600 pages of practical anecdotes and tactical testimonials, this weighty manual was printed practically at cost, to make it more readily available to revolutionaries.

**Chris Carlsson. *After the Deluge: A Novel of Post-Economic San Francisco* (Full Enjoyment Books 2004) \$14** Carlsson reveals his vivid vision of the future in a provocative journey to the Bay Area of 2157. In the tradition of other Northern California critical utopias like Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia* and Starhawk's *Fifth Sacred Thing*, *After the Deluge* is more imaginary treasure map than utopia-by-the-numbers blueprint. In an abundant society where all work is voluntary and everything is free, Carlsson's characters pose complicated dilemmas in a new world that maintains bizarre similarities to the civilization it left behind.

***Creating Anarchy* by Ron Sakolsky (Fifth Estate Books 2005) \$15** Twenty chapters in a dynamic collage of ideas and action. This vibrant collection glows with flames of discontent and defiance and flows with waves of laughter and possibility. Ranging widely from Mayday to Utopia, from Refusal to Autonomy, and from Insurrection to Imagination, this compilation is in turn defiant, reflective, and playful—a brick for hurling through the windows of despair and a doorway to creating an anarchy that is not afraid to dream.



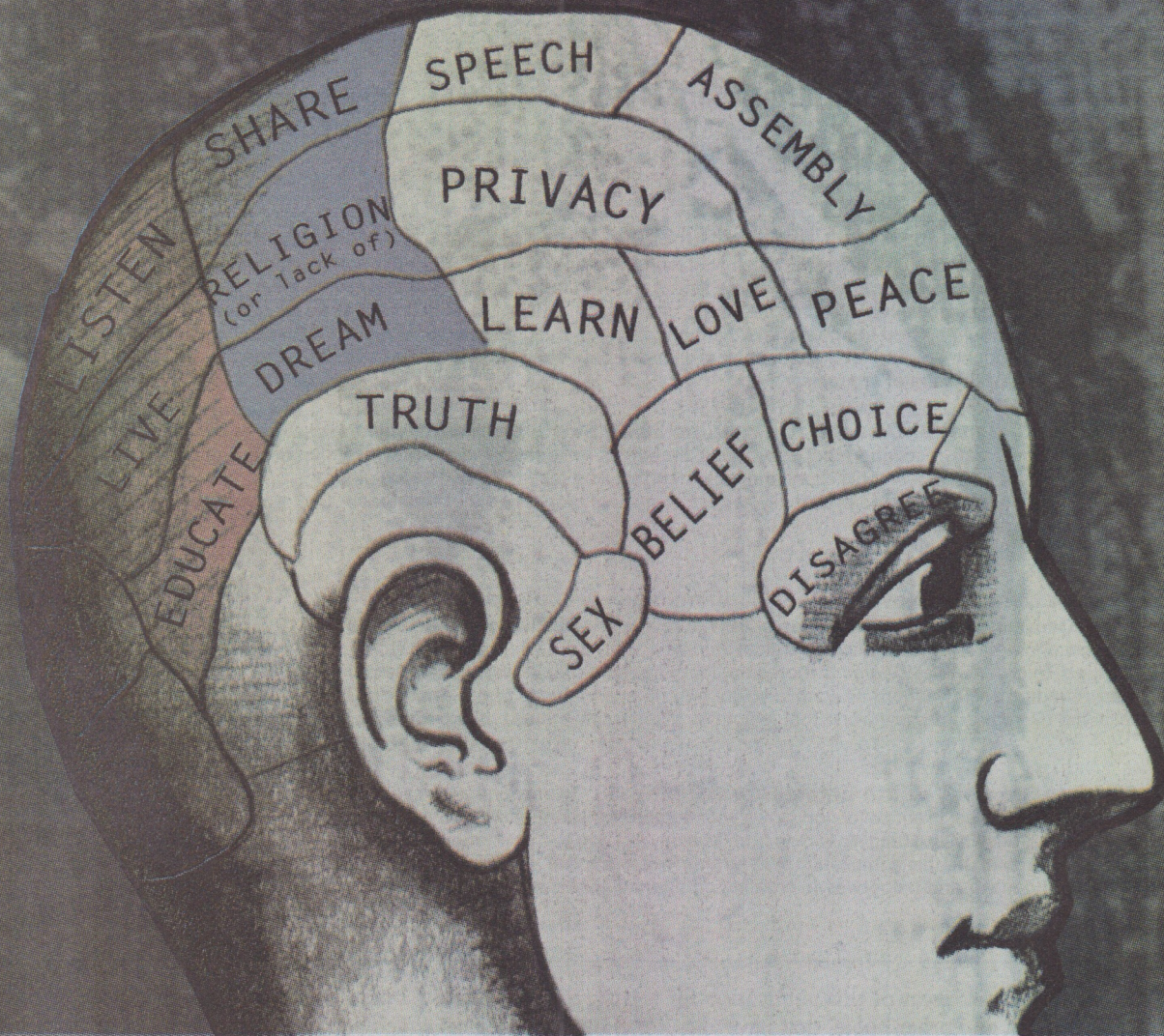
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